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NOVEL AND ROMANCE

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THE

NOVELS AND ROMANCES

OF

ANNA ELIZA BRAY.

THE TALBA.

London: Published 1845, by Longman Brown &c.

THE TALBA:

OR,

MOOR OF PORTUGAL.

A ROMANCE.

BY

MRS. BRAY.

Souls made of fire, and children of the sun,
With whom revenge is virtue.

YOUNG.

A NEW EDITION,
REVISED AND CORRECTED, WITH NOTES BY THE AUTHOR.

LONDON:
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

1845.

LONDON:
Printed by Manning and Mason, Ivy Lane, St. Paul's.

Robert

Anna-Eliza-Bray.

TO

THE REV. F. V. J. ARUNDELL, M.A.

RECTOR OF LANDULPH, CORNWALL.

MY DEAR SIR,

To you, whose "DISCOVERIES IN ASIA MINOR," and "VISIT TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES OF ASIA" have afforded me so much both of instruction and delight, I venture to inscribe these pages; as, from the very interesting account you have given of the kindly and benevolent feelings, so common amongst the followers of Mahometanism in Greece, I am induced to hope you will feel some little interest in the manner in which I have endeavoured to delineate one of the Moslem characters in this work; and that you will not find it other than faithful. For, though the principal characters in it, among whom is Ines de Castro, are, generally speaking, Christian, the personage here alluded to is "THE TALBA," the Moor after whom I have named the Romance.

Not merely, however, as a mark of my unfeigned esteem for the learning, the genius, and the truly religious spirit you have thrown into all your works, do I dedicate this to you; but also as a testimony of my high value for the friendship with which you have honoured both my husband and myself during so many years; and believe me,

MY DEAR SIR,

Your most sincere and faithful Friend,

ANNA ELIZA BRAY.

THE TALBA.

CHAPTER I.

——— And Cintra's summits tell
How the grim Saracen's dread legions fell.
MICKLE.

On one of the mountain eminences of Cintra in Portugal, a pile of rugged and broken rocks, adorned in part by the scanty herbage that grows within their cavities, overhangs a smooth and somewhat broad space of ground, where, notwithstanding the heat of the climate, a carpet of the finest grass appears always verdant, being refreshed by a little rush of water that wells out beneath the rocks, and running in a narrow channel through the midst of the grassy glade, finds its way down the precipice which forms a boundary to this delightful spot. The view it commands is magnificent; and though so varied, yet of so interesting a character that description can but feebly convey any adequate idea of its beauty. The eye ranges over an extensive tract of country, and contemplates with delight mixed with wonder, the strange, wild, and grotesque combinations of rock, that rise into conical shapes, and a thousand other fantastic forms, on all parts of the mountain; whilst, between rock and rock, except where prevented by sudden declivities, the hand of cultivation has created little gardens that might vie with those of Eden itself for the lively beauty of their colour and the delicious perfume they breathe around. The rich green of the lemon groves, the pale pink blossom of the almond tree, and hedges formed of the laurustinus and gum cistus, are seen in great profusion; whilst, towards the base of these heights, the vines hang in luxuriant abundance, and shew at one view, as do the olive and orange groves, the peculiar treasures that constitute the opulence and pride of the Portuguese.

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there was no access, except by a little narrow path that wound amidst masses of rock, and often by the side of the deep chasms or abrupt precipices, which rendered the way not merely difficult, but even dangerous, to any one who was not familiar with the track. On this account, perhaps, it was little known; for it seemed scarcely trodden, save by the foot of the goat or the kids, as they leaped and gamboled from rock to rock, wholly unconscious of fear—which, indeed, is the greatest security to any creature, whether endowed with human reason or mere instinct—amid rocky paths and giddy precipices.

It was during the reign of the monarch we have mentioned, on a fine evening, when the sun, which looks on Spain and Portugal with so much ardour, was slowly sinking below the waters of the Atlantic, that a solitary figure ascended the path we have just described as leading to the pile of rocks, the grassy glade, and that mound of earth which was the last tenement of a human being.

The figure was a woman, tall, and so well formed that every limb seemed to be cast in nature's finest mould. The features of her face were regular and small, except the forehead, which was of ample breadth; the complexion was of the deepest brown, with a reddish cast—in fact, tawny—the usual complexion of the better order of Moors, who once overran and inhabited different parts of Portugal as well as Spain. The face of her we now describe, was rendered expressive by the animation of eyes jet black, and full of that liquid lustre so particularly observable in Moorish beauty. Her teeth were white like ivory; and the well-formed lips, crimson as the rose of Sharon, finely harmonised with the richness of a complexion that needed only the power of habit, perhaps, to find as many admirers as the fairest skin in natives of a colder climate. The beautiful Moor we have here noticed, was attired after the manner of her people at the date of our narrative, towards the middle of the fourteenth century. Some of the adornments of her person were not such as we should think could add to her beauty, yet they did not efface it; so difficult is it for art to spoil the productions of nature: nor were these adornments altogether the effects of mere female vanity—as a part of them was connected with the customs of her country, and indicated the rank, or birth, of her who wore them.

The custom to which we more particularly allude was that of staining different parts of the body. Of her whom we describe, the feet, the palms of her hands, and fingers' ends, were of a deep saffron colour, having been dyed with the plant

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THE

NOVELS AND ROMANCES

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THE TALBA.

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templation of the object before her, that she neither saw nor heard the approach of a youth who had followed her steps to this secluded spot, and, now stealing behind her, made her sensible of his presence by softly saying "Mother!"

It was but a single word; yet it was such a one as carries with it a charm to the maternal breast, and is seldom pronounced in vain. In infancy, that name claims protection for the helpless; in youth, when uttered by a promising son, it calls up a sense of paternal pride, mingled with affection, that no earthly feeling can surpass. Aza in a moment caught the sound, and clasped her arms round the neck of the boy, as she said, in a voice that spoke her strong emotions, "Hamet! my son! at this place! on this day!—Why have you followed me? Leave me—now is not a time——" "Yes, mother!" answered the Moorish youth; "now, and at this place. I have followed to implore you, nay, to claim it as a right of blood, that I should share all the sorrows of a mother. Why should the noble Alcanzor lie in his bed of dust, and his son stand by and look upon it, while he is yet forbidden to know each circumstance of those injuries that brought him down to the grave?"

"You are yet too young, Hamet; you are but a boy," said Aza; "I fear to trust thy ungoverned years with the knowledge of that which, when told, will require a man's sense, as well as a man's arm, to do thee right."

"But I am old enough to know you are unhappy, my mother; to know that my father is dead—brought low by the cruelty of wicked men; that I, who was free born, am now as a slave amongst this people. Do I need more to make me safely to be trusted? Wherefore, then, hide from me each particular of the sad story of your wrongs? I have no birthright to claim, but that I may know the injuries I inherit. They were my father's; and being his, they are now mine. Give me, then, what is my due."

Aza turned and gazed upon her son, as he spoke, with thoughts so acutely painful, yet so tender and affectionate, that her entire soul seemed to speak in her eyes those feelings she wanted words to express. Her son was about seventeen years old; in stature he had not yet attained the full growth of manhood; his limbs were slender and elastic, but, though they shewed activity, there was nothing in their formation that evinced superior strength. Hamet's was the form well suited for the nimble hunter, but was without that power which we attach to the idea of a youth born for the toils of

war. In his face there was much of the same expression which characterised the countenance of his mother, yet less of majesty. It was the face of a frank ingenuous youth, who feels keenly, and speaks openly what he feels; yet was there high enthusiasm in the bright black eye of the Moorish boy. His complexion, though so young, was of a darker shade than that of Aza. It shone like polished marble. He wore a short dress, that left bare his neck and limbs, shewing their slight and fine proportions to so much advantage, that he might have been compared to one of those bronze statues of antiquity, considered by modern connoisseurs as models of excellence in manly beauty.

The eye of maternal love sees with delight the most minute perfection in its offspring. As Aza looked upon her son, she seemed to dwell on every feature of his countenance, as if her affectionate gaze could never be satisfied; whilst the boy continued, in terms full of love and warmth, to urge her to confide to him the full knowledge of his father's injuries.

"Thou art young, my child," Aza again replied; "the sun of thy days shines bright upon thee. Why, before it is needful, should I make thee know such sorrows as may cast a shade on them for ever? This is the day of thy father's death; and—"

"And therefore," said Hamet, "it is the day that I should learn the fatal cause that brought him to the grave. Here, on this spot, where rests the earthly dust of the noble Alcanzor—here, Allah, receive my prayer!" The Moor fell on his knees before the grave as he spoke, and raising his hands and eyes to heaven, he thus continued: "Allah! thou only and true God, before whose throne kneel those spirits of fire that bear to thee the vows of the faithful and the records of the actions of men, do Thou hear my prayer! teach me to reverence thy law; to obey thy will. Lead my youth in the paths of wisdom. Give me a heart to love, to sustain my mother in her afflictions, so that I may be as tender as was my father to her, ere Azrael, in the shadow of whose wing is death, sundered his bond of life. Make me worthy to share her counsels, prudent to keep them, and, if it be thy will, nerve my arm and strengthen my spirit to avenge my father's wrongs upon these idolatrous and unbelieving enemies of thy law. Hear, Allah! hear and grant my prayer! Now, mother," said Hamet, as he turned to her, "now do you fear to trust me?"

"No, my son," replied Aza, "I will trust thee; thou art worthy to share all my cares. Look upon this earth! He

who lies there was thy father, whose spirit is now refreshed in the paradise of the faithful, till Israfel shall sound the last dread trumpet; at whose call, earth and sea, and air, shall give up the dead; and as the waters are gathered up together, even so shall these be collected, and cast into the balance of judgment. Then thy father shall rise, and his spirit, armed with a thousand wrongs, shall hurl to the dread abyss, below the arch of Alsirat, those who were his cruel oppressors. This is the day of his death. First, therefore, let us perform those rights due to his memory; and then, if thy young heart can bear the tale, the heritage of a father's injuries shall no longer be withheld from thee."

Aza, as she spoke, took up the basket containing sweet herbs and flowers, slowly paced round the grave, and scattered them upon the dust. The law of Mahomet, enforced by that of Abdallah Meleck, of whose sect the Moors were rigid followers, forbids the dead to be interred within a mosque; as it was considered a profanation of a temple dedicated to divine worship, to place within it the decaying remains of mortality. The Moors, therefore, frequently buried their dead in some spot which was selected either for its beauty or its solitary and sequestered character. There was a simplicity in the rites of burial, together with those observed on visiting the grave, full of pathos, and well calculated to impress the living with a tender reminiscence of the departed; since it was not only a custom with this interesting people to throw into rhyme any extraordinary events in their history, but also to sing at the graves of their departed friends some poetical recollection of the acts of their lives. In obedience to this custom, Aza now chanted, in a low monotonous tone, some verses in memory of her Alcanzor.

When Aza had finished her funereal song, and had accomplished some other simple rites due to the honour of the dead, she sat down upon that portion of rock, near the grave, overshadowed by the venerable cork-tree we have before noticed. Hamet seated himself by her side with deep attention, and, with a countenance over which the excited state of his expectations had cast an expression of anxiety mingled with awe, prepared to listen to the story of his father's fate.

Aza thus commenced her tale:—"Though in me, my son, you now behold but the poor, the helpless widow of Alcanzor, who, in order to maintain life, is obliged, like the meanest of her people, to tend her flocks to the field, to cultivate the growth of the vine, and to spin with the distaff for her daily

bread; yet once could her ancestors, from this very rock, behold no space of earth but what they called their own. I am the last of the daughters of the noble house of Abu Ali Texefin, a prince who perished in the great battle of Ourique, when the arms of the Christian prevailed. His sons took shelter in the kingdom of Algarva. By successive wars, the power and the dominion of our people was lessened, nay, almost broken. Too well is the sad history of our oppressions known to thee. Scarcely, therefore, need I tell that, after many victories, in which every foot of land was bought by the Christian princes at the countless loss of Moorish blood, still thy noble father, my Alcanzor, held out against them. His castle, like the eagle's nest, was in the summit of the rock, a resting-place for every passing cloud. It was impregnable to man, and towered above men, even like Alcanzor's lofty spirit, which nothing but the will of Allah could subdue. Never did the courage of thy father fail, till Eblis, that dark spirit of evil, envying such greatness of soul in a son of earth, opened the gates of treachery to betray him."

"Eblis is the father of Despair," said Hamet; "he fell from the obedience of God, and was an outcast from heaven. So proud a spirit would not do homage to Adam, the first caliph, even though at the command of Allah. I wonder not so dark a power is ever at work to wreak his vengeance on the sons of earth; he is a spirit for whom, as holy mollahs tell us, we have no weapons of victory, save those of almsgiving, fasting, and prayer."

Aza continued—"The warrior, my son, too often neglects the rites of his devotion, and thinks his best prayers to Allah are those which speak in the trumpet summons to battle with the idolatrous christian, who worships, with as little sense as if he were a brute, those images, those stocks and stones, carved by his own hands, and named after creatures like himself, whom he calls saints; whilst a simple virgin, the daughter of man, is more worshipped than Him at whose nod the waters rose, and the dry land, with all that therein lived, was no more found, saving the Prophet Noah and his sons.* Such are Christians in their faith: and, O thou Creator of man! what are they in their works?—Thy father, my Alcanzor, kept faith and word with them; and how did they requite him?"

* Should any of our readers, who are unacquainted with the Mahometan faith, feel surprised to hear a Moor allude to any circumstance of the Jewish history, or of revelation, perhaps it may not be amiss to inform them, that, in the Koran, Mahomet incorporated, and often disfigured, considerable portions of the Holy Bible.

"And did my father make compact with the accursed infidels of the earth?" cried Hamet with warmth. "No wonder, then, that his guardian spirit was driven back by the temptation of Eblis."

"Thou art too hasty, my son," said Aza; "do not thus in thy unpractised years attempt to scan beyond that dark veil which hides from us the secrets of the world invisible. Thy father did nothing that misbecame him. To save the lives of many noble Moors who had become prisoners to Alonso, he consented to yield to him uncontested the valley, or champaign country, claimed by our people as an ancient possession of their fathers. The further condition of this treaty was, that the Moor should withdraw his forces to the mountains; and the king promised that there his castle should be unmolested. As a yet farther proof of Alcanzor's good faith to hold sacred the treaty, he consented to shew the rites of hospitality to any christian who might be passing the mountainous paths near his castle. Such were the terms;—now hear with attention by what base means they were made the cause of Alcanzor's ruin."

"My ears drink in your words," replied Hamet, "as eagerly as the fainting traveller of the desert drinks of the solitary fountain that rises beneath the palms of Elim. Those waters are to him renewed life; but thy words are to me, my mother, as death. Yet go on."

"Alonso, who is called the Brave for having so often dipped his hands in the blood of our people, till they became seven times dyed in as many cruel victories—he, at the very hour of making this compact with the unsuspecting Alcanzor, had determined on his ruin. By what especial means he contrived his treachery, I cannot tell you, for I have never learnt them to the full extent. But thus much I can relate with certainty. A christian traveller, for such he seemed to be, begged, at our castle gates, the rites of hospitality: he was admitted, and warmed by our hearth, for the bleak winds had chilled him as he passed the mountain's top. He drank from our cup; nay, he took even salt with us at the same board. The accursed sons of Judah would have respected such a bond; but this christian, who could see the generous Alcanzor as a father to all around him—who could look upon Aza his unoffending wife, with two children at her knees, and thy innocent self in her arms,—this christian, I say, who could warm him by the same fire that gave warmth to us his fellow beings, who drank of our cup, and took the covenant of salt with us in the bond

of hospitality, he, even he, betrayed us. The walls of our castle sheltered his head; our good faith was as a shield to him, under whose shadow he reposed in safety; yet, at the dead hour of sleep, when the black curtain of night shrouds evil deeds, and the wolf howls to the moon as he searches for his prey in the mountains, but with more of mercy than man, then did this christian, having by previous treachery concerted the means, throw abroad our castle gates—all was in readiness without,—and Don Pedro, the son and heir of Alonso, rushed in upon us with a host of armed followers. Our people were slain. Thy father, myself, with thee in my arms, became prisoners; for we were surprised almost in our sleep: and, O Prophet of heaven! how shall I speak the rest? The christians fired our castle; and both thy brothers, with many of our faithful servants, perished in the flames! For never have we since heard of them. On that spot, where the towers of thy father's castle had risen for many a year, and appeared dark and awful as they stood amidst the clouds, after this fatal night was nothing left but a blackened ruin, to point the fall of the last of the Moorish kings!"

"If there is power in heaven or on earth," cried Hamet impatiently, "this night of horrors shall meet with an avenger. O thou God of spirits, of men, of angels, of all created things, wilt thou slumber at this? Let the widow's wrongs ascend to thee, and cry before thy throne! Let the prayer of a fatherless boy call down thy curses of war, of famine, and the spotted plague, on him who has made desolate the habitation of the defender of thy laws; on him who consumed and devoured his dwelling with thy own element of fire! And oh! may I but live to chastise that treacherous hand, which, like a coward and a slave, opened the door to murder in the helplessness of sleep! Give me but life for this, and I shall have lived ages full of honour, though my date of being finished the next hour."

Hamet, as he spake these last words, cast his eyes upon the grave of Alcanzor; and, as he started from his seat, pressing his hands together and looking up to heaven, at length exclaimed, "I will not look upon thy dust! Spirit of my father! it is to thee I ascend in thought. Thy son shall requite thy oppressors."

"There spoke the soul of thy father—of Alcanzor," said Aza Anzurez; "but listen yet with patience. The time is not yet come. Hear me conclude the tale of our sorrows. Thy father and myself were destined for death. It might

be, however, that some feeling of shame for the treacherous means Alonso had contrived, by which his son Don Pedro should surprise us, caused even the king to shew us a false mercy; for what was granting us our lives to linger them out in wretchedness, but giving us space more bitterly to feel our ruin? Thou too, thou, who in thy infant innocence, like a flower that springs up amidst hard and arid rocks, mightst have been as a solitary blossom of comfort in our misery—thou wert held a prisoner apart from us, lest thy father should instil into thy young mind a spirit of growing rebellion towards his conquerors. After thy father's death, which I shall too soon relate, some pitying heart interceded for the lone widow, and her son was restored to her knees. Or it might be that Alonso thought a woman of our race was by nature a slave, and could never feel herself, nor teach her children to feel, one noble thought of liberty. But he knew not the heart of Aza Anzurez, nor shall he know it."

"Mother," said Hamet, who saw, notwithstanding the feeling of wounded pride and honour which in some measure had given more of energy than of tenderness to the melancholy narrative of Aza, that the recollection of her husband and children had brought tears into her eyes—"mother, be comforted, for I am left; I will be all to you. Had my father lived, he would not have watched over you with more affectionate care than will Hamet, so that you will but dry those tears; ours are wrongs to stir up the latent passions of the soul. Tears are due to tender sorrows, but not to injuries like ours; they demand such sacrifices as Eblis himself would receive—hatred, death, and all that train of human misery which awaits on a just and ever-breathing indignation. Had my father lived——"

"Allah be praised that he is dead!" said Aza. "Would you wish that he who had wielded the sceptre of a hundred kings, should live a slave? No! Alcanzor bore much, too much, for my sake, in patience. He saw his people fall around him, like the ripe ear before the sickle of the husbandman. The decree was passed in fate, he could not save them. His castle he saw in flames—the ashes of his elder-born were mingled with those of the blackened pile! He saw himself, his wife, his only living child, prisoners to the enemies of God! He saw it, yet he bore it as a man—in silence, without a tear. But when the infidel came to the door of the ruined dwelling where we had sought a home, and claimed that, from his hard-earned daily toil, he should

pay the tax as a common slave, his stout heart failed; and he, who in war was mighty as the lion seeking his prey, even he drooped his manly head like a bulrush, subdued by secret grief. Yet this feeling was but for a moment; his high spirit returned with redoubled strength. He denied he was a slave, though he admitted he was a prisoner. Words arose from words, till, maddened by the memory of his wrongs, and now insulted by injurious terms, Alcanzor arose but to destroy. He smote the Christian who would have taxed him; the wretched man died beneath the blow; and thy father's, thy noble father's life was made the forfeit of his passionate offence. He perished by order of Alonso, for having shed christian blood in a quarrel at his own door."

Aza paused; her agitated feelings for some minutes would not allow her to proceed; and Hamet, shocked and overpowered by what he heard, with every tender effort, yet in silence, endeavoured to soothe her distressed mind. At length she made an effort to conclude her melancholy tale.

"Thus much, my son, of our sad story is now fully known to you. If I have hitherto concealed many of these particulars, the motive has been, lest, prompted by youth and a fiery impatient spirit, some act, some word, might escape you in the presence of our enemies, which could nothing avail us at this time, but might serve them as a pretext to satisfy their jealous doubts, by depriving us of the little mercy they have extended towards us. I feared lest they should again remove you from my sight; or may be, banish you to some far and foreign land, where Hamet would languish in slavery the remainder of those days, which, now there is hope, may be shared with his sorrowing mother. Let what I have said, therefore, teach you prudence. If my misery at the thought of losing you for ever cannot do this, nothing will; since, alas! what other motive can I urge to make you cautious? Your path is encompassed by enemies, who lie in wait for your destruction. They are like the serpents and venomous reptiles which lie hidden in the burning sands of the desert, that they may surprise the heedless traveller on his way, and sting him to madness and to death. Beware then."

"Fear not, my mother!" said Hamet; "though young in years, I can, I will be old in prudence, when your safety is at hazard. But this is not all. You have sometimes thrown out dark suggestions, imperfect hints, that a time might come, when Hamet, the son of Alcanzor, would be called on not to disgrace his blood. What meant those words? Tell me: I will be wary."

"Not now—not yet—some other time. Enough has past this hour to prepare your mind for whatever events may happen hereafter. Urge me no farther: the time is not yet come."

Hamet looked dissatisfied; for the ardour of youth is seldom restrained by motives of prudence; and an impatient temper like his can ill brook delay or suspense, when its feelings, either of curiosity or expectation, are excited. Still he was an affectionate son; and respect for the distress of his mother restrained him. He did not, therefore, venture to urge her farther on a subject she seemed reluctant to communicate. In addition to which, it may be remarked that the Moors, who, like Hamet, had early become prisoners to the victorious christians during the wars between them (which raged, more or less violently, till the infidels were finally driven out of Spain at a later period), were accustomed, in some measure, to an habitual self-restraint; as the practice of it was necessary to secure even their existence. Those who could not wholly subdue their feelings of hatred towards their conquerors, too often disguised them by the cloak of hypocrisy. They became pliant and cunning in proportion as they became more and more enslaved, till at last the Moorish character lost not only its original frankness and sincerity, but was latterly distinguished by that of uncommon talent in the mean arts of dissembling; so true is it that the liberty of man is necessary to preserve his virtue. These remarks, however, apply more to the enslaved state of the Moors in general, than to Hamet individually. The young are seldom dissemblers; since it is not till after a long intercourse with society that the mind learns that great art of self-defence—to conceal its feelings and its thoughts; a lesson taught by experiencing those abuses to which frankness is continually exposed in its intercourse with a knavish and a selfish world.

Hamet, on the contrary, was frank almost to rashness, and warm in proportion to his sincerity. Debarred those privileges to which he had a natural right by his birth, his father dead, and his fortunes reduced, he had found, since the death of Alcanzor, but one friend, but one being who considered him with that interest and affection which give a human creature value even in his own eyes. That friend was a mother. Maternal love had supplied, with its watchful cares, its unceasing tenderness, the place of all the world besides. Dearly, deeply did Hamet requite it. His affections were strong, and like a river, which flows on in one continued channel; so that

they had all the force of concentration in one point to make them as powerful as they were uniform and undivided in their course. No son ever loved a parent more than Hamet loved Aza. Often would he leave those exercises so natural to his years and to his sex, to sit by the side of his widowed mother, enlivening, by his innocent discourse, the tedious hours of her solitude. Sometimes he would assist her in her toils, or learn from her such lessons of instruction as she delighted to give to his young mind.

To him this evening had been one of peculiar interest. It was the first in which Aza had fully confided to her son the knowledge of all those melancholy events that had deprived him of a father and of a father's possessions. Long and feelingly did he converse with his mother on so engrossing, yet so painful, a theme; nor was it till the sun had entirely set, and the shadows of night were gathering around both earth and sea, that the Moor, with her son, prepared to return to their dwelling. Aza arose, took Hamet by thehand, and casting an affectionate look on the grave, which was now but a dark mound scarcely to be distinguished from the surrounding rocks, said, as she departed, "Farewell to thee, Alcanzor! This was the day of thy death. If thy spirit, from the paradise of the faithful, can look down on us, accept the offerings made to thy memory by thy wife and by thy son——" She paused, raised her hand, and wiped away with her veil a tear that had started to her eye. "I never thought thou couldst have died," continued Aza, "nor that the hour would come when I should stand by what once was thee, yet never hear thy voice, and never see thee smile upon me. But these are wild words and foolish thoughts. Farewell, Alcanzor! Light and dew shall again fall upon thy grave: the flowers that grow upon it shall spring up and bloom: but never more will the hopes of Aza revive. Cold is thy grave; yet not so cold as the heart of thy widowed mate."

Hamet pressed his mother's hand in silence as he led her from the melancholy spot. Both descended the path, and turning into another at some little distance in the mountain, again began to ascend a second path, which led towards the ruined building that now afforded a shelter to Aza and her son.

CHAPTER II.

This is some fellow
Who, having been praised for bluntness, doth affect
A saucy roughness.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE Moors were at all times a pastoral people. Their petty kings and princes, in the midst of their warlike exercises and achievements, disdained not to give their attention to the due care of those flocks and herds from which, in a considerable degree, they received support. Aza, together with her son, now inhabited a ruined building that had once been a magnificent dwelling of her own people, ere they were driven from the neighbourhood of Lisbon many a year before. Aza had a small flock, both of sheep and goats. The wool of the former supplied her occupation for the distaff; and the milk of the latter, together with herbs, fruits, and bread, formed one of the principal articles of food for her household; as the poorer sort of Moors seldom ate animal food, and that only on extraordinary occasions.

One male domestic had followed the fallen fortunes of his mistress, and still lived with her, acting the part of herdsman to her flocks, or doing any other offices that could assist her wants and ease her toils. A little Moorish girl, an orphan, was her only female attendant. Another Moor must also be mentioned, who, though not absolutely an inmate with the family of Aza, was nevertheless so constant and so venerated a guest —often residing for months together beneath her roof—that he could command within the walls of her dwelling, if he chose to do so, as entirely as herself. The progress of our tale now demands that we should introduce two of these personages to the reader, and that on the very evening the high-born Aza had communicated to her son the melancholy story of his father's fate.

The sun, as we before noticed, set in full splendour over the broad bosom of the Atlantic. It gleamed with uncommon lustre upon the tall forest of chestnuts, intermixed with the oak and cork-tree, that lay near the base of the mountain of Cintra. This forest was crossed by a road which led towards

Lisbon. Not only the woods, but the environs, for many miles, presented a scene of rich delights, only to be found in a climate warmed by perpetual suns, and watered by showers that refresh the earth, without giving it that surcharge of vapours which produces fogs, damps, and unwholesome dews.

Numerous vineyards lay around, laden with the clustering grape, that affords to man wine to make glad his heart, and sometimes to make it sad too, when moderation ceases to temper the draught, and reason becomes lost or degraded in the bowl. In one part of the forest of Cintra, a pure and crystal stream burst, with a considerable fall, sparkling and bubbling from a rock. Gliding onward, it found its way down the gentle slope of a hill, beneath the shade of the chestnut, and of many an evergreen oak, that spread its broad and leafy arms over a wilderness of dark heath and furze, mingled with aromatic herbs whose perfume made the air delicious to the senses. The iris, the laurel, the myrtle, grew spontaneously around, and blossomed on the banks of the stream, that fed their lively verdure with its refreshing moisture.

In some parts of the forest were seen those long and sombre vistas, which, whilst they invite both the eye and foot to range amid their intricate paths of spreading branches chequered with quivering light and shade, impress the mind of the wanderer with a sense of anxiety and uncertainty as to whither they lead—a feeling which, though not devoid of delight, carries with it that slight degree of fear, sufficient, perhaps, to heighten enjoyment without creating terror. At the opening of these forest avenues the sun darted beams of fire, which, as they fell on the stately forms of many an oak, or the wrinkled trunk of an ancient cork-tree, imbedded in moss, and festooned with flowers, shewed all their various colouring; affording also, in the breadth and strength of this transient but sunny illumination, a fine contrast to the settled and deep shadows that hung thickly around, like those brief but brilliant portions of human existence which relieve the fixed gloom that wraps in shade the fortunes of the miserable.

One of the marked and peculiar features of the neighbourhood of Cintra consists in those giant masses of rock that arise, rugged and barren, in the midst of the most wooded and cultivated parts of the mountain. Such a mass of rock might be seen standing in the midst of the forest we have described; and to the eye of fancy, it looked like one of those castles of enchantment inhabited by the genii of the Moslems' creed, which so often formed a subject for Arabian story. It was

from a portion of this rock that issued the little streamlet we have noticed; which, like the voice of the forest, seemed constantly, in its low and musical murmurs, to hold converse with those invisible spirits whom the same fanciful legends would, in all probability, have held to be the guardians of the spot.

All around was wild and beautiful. Two human beings alone were seen to give animation to this sequestered wood. One of these, by his attire, could instantly be known for a Talba, or wise man, so reverenced by the Moors.

The office or profession of a talba consisted essentially in a knowledge of medicine, and in the study of astronomy, (added to which were the power to foretel what eclipses portended evil, the expounding strange dreams, and predicting events, in a manner considered infallible); above all, in a deep acquaintance with the arts of astrology and magic; the latter study being ever accompanied with a knowledge of poisons, charms, and spells of every description; so that there was not a venomous reptile which crawled on the face of the earth, nor a noxious plant, from that of the deadly African thorn to the fatal hemlock, but its several qualities and degrees of doing evil were said to be revealed to him. He of whom we speak, Hassan, was, if report told truth, not the least distinguished amongst his people for a knowledge in these arts, that made him at once respected and feared both by friends and enemies.

The Talba, though advanced in age, had none of that decrepitude which often marks the course of time; on the contrary, he looked still to be a powerful man; tall and well proportioned, with an air of dignity in his carriage that excited an involuntary feeling of respect even with those who held both his nation and his religion in contempt. His features were of that regular cast often seen amongst the Moslems inhabiting Spain and Portugal; but there was something peculiar in the expression, receiving its impress from the mind, that gave to his countenance the look of one whom we should hold in suspicion, if not in dread. The lean and swarthy cheek, the cold-black eye, deeply sunk into the socket, which surrounded its glowing pupil as a dark cavern does the small bright flame of a forge that burns within it, were all highly characteristic; and the shaggy eyebrow, with its grey hairs, formed a strong contrast to the wrinkled forehead, that shone like burnished copper beneath the rising tower of a high black cap made of sheep's skin, and retaining the natural colour of the wool. The form of the face was an exact oval; the nose straight, and the cartilage that divides the nostrils

finely marked. The mouth was overshadowed by a long grisly beard flowing upon the breast, that gave an air of reverence to the head.

The athletic figure of the old man was wrapped in a loose gown of red silk, fastened about the middle by a broad belt. On his breast he wore a square plate of silver, ornamented with peacocks, beautifully inlaid with different coloured metals, so as to imitate the plumage of these birds. An inscription in the Arabic character, containing some verses from the Koran, appeared in the centre. This silver plate, worn only by holy men or learned Talbas, was, in all probability, a custom borrowed from the Jewish pectoral or breast-plate of the priests under the law of Moses, since not only in the Koran is contained much of the history of the Jews taken from the Bible, but many ceremonies also of that chosen people were copied by Mahomet in the propagation of his own doctrines.

The manners of the Talba were in general grave, and not without dignity, though habitual caution seemed to rule his speech. Still there were moments in which his powerful feelings would break through all restraints, and shew themselves, such as they were—warm, zealous, and impetuous. Such moments, however, were rare; for his watchful eye, undimmed by years, his foot ever ready to start in obedience to the command of his Moorish mistress, the widowed Aza, all spoke the conquered, the fallen Moor. Nay, his enemies averred that tyranny, which bound his liberty, had cast a chain yet more degrading upon his mind; so that he was held captive by that base band of thoughts which cunning, dissembling, and hypocrisy help to make up. Thus report described the Talba: if true or false remains hereafter to be seen. Certain it is, too many of the Moors, sunk into slavery after the yoke was thrown upon them by the Christians, deserved such a character; and all, indiscriminately, shared in the general odium. The companion of the Talba was of a lower degree and station, being nothing but herdsman to Aza Anzurez; yet he once had filled a higher office, and possessed so much natural shrewdness, as to feel something very like contempt even for that superstitious learning most reverenced by his own people: in fact, he was one of those strong spirits who soon detect falsehood, shake off its yoke, but do not follow up the pursuit of truth with sufficient diligence to overtake her, and to place her on the pedestal from which they have thrown down the idol Error.

Cassim, so was the herdsman called, was short in stature,

as well as lank in limb. There was a wild, a grinning expression about his face, accompanied as it was with a look of sense and humour, that produced altogether a countenance in which it would be difficult to decide if what is grotesque, or what is intelligent, most prevailed. Cassim, whose colour was more swart than Hassan's (for there are different shades in the umber complexion, as well as in the fairer skin), had a head covered with short thick locks of hair, as curly as the back of a water dog. His teeth, white as ivory, were perpetually seen through the half-opened lips, as the muscles of the mouth were curled by the sarcastic humour of the man. His attentivee ar, like that of the North American Indian, seemed to have the power of raising and bringing itself forward to catch the most low or distant sounds; and he had also something of those pliant manners, of that ready obedience, which shewed the enslaved Moor.

Cassim's limbs were bare; he wore nothing but a vest of common gray cloth, bound round the waist with a leathern belt: in it was seen a long knife, so stuck as to shew that the buckhorn handle supported a blade fit for defence, as well as for commoner purposes. The voice of Cassim was in nothing ill-suited to his appearance or to his character; it was sharp and shrill, like the biting frost or cutting wind, to which his own nature might be compared, with much truth in the figure.

As Hassan sat on a portion of the rock, engaged in contemplating a long scroll of parchment he held in his hand, the herdsman, who had been busied in milking the goats that supplied the household of Aza, in returning home, at the time we introduce them to the reader, passed near the spot. He stopped—put down the vessel containing the milk,—then, stealing softly up to the elbow of the Moorish philosopher, intruded upon his studies with an air in which there was more of freedom than of respect,. and exclaimed, "Wise Hassan! thou who watchest the stars as I do my foolish sheep and goats—wise as thou art, I much question if the stars are not as well known to me as to thee, for I gaze on them when fear of the red-fanged wolf keeps me watching near the fold. And as they shone last night, so will they shine to-night, and every succeeding one. Yet never a word did they tell me of my lot, or how long I was to watch, or at what hour the four-footed skulking robber would appear."

"Thou art an everlasting babbler," said the Talba; "even as this water-brook, which never ceases its tongue, though it utters the same wearisome sound without sense, and no one makes answer to it."

"Nay, that I deny," replied Cassim, "the sound varies; and it hath a sense in it, which never utters falsehood. Thus, when the day is fine and the air soft, it comes plashing gently down, talking to the stones of fair weather; but when a tempest is up, and the water-floods are loose, it will keep temper with the times, and roar ye like any bull fighting in the king of Portugal's own ring: and when the sun burns over our heads day after day, and not a cloud is seen, then your waterfall hides his head and keeps silence, and lets the sun have his course; like a wise fool, who knows that the hot mood of his master is best to be met by keeping out of sight and holding his peace. But look! who comes hither?"

Cassim pointed, as he spoke, to the road which led through the forest to Lisbon; and, slowly advancing up the long avenue of trees that overhung the way, perceived one of those assemblages of people frequently to be met with, even at this day, in Spain and Portugal—a procession of pilgrims. The train was headed by a friar of the order of St. Francis; a very favourite saint at all times with the Portuguese. His long black gown, the girdle of common rope that bound his middle, his bare feet, and emaciated appearance, all shewed him to be a true brother of that wandering race of monks who professed to imitate the labours of the Apostles. He of St. Francis carried aloft a silver cross, and was followed by several monks of various orders in Portugal, each bearing a cross, with a rosary of large beads on his arm.

As the procession advanced from beneath the shadow of the trees, the sun, which gleamed strong upon it, shewed that those who composed it were young and old of both sexes, who had all been alike engaged in this holy emigration. They were altogether of a mixed description. Many, in fact, appeared to be petty traders, and bore upon their heads, or their shoulders, wallets and packages of merchandise. Each had a scrip at his girdle, and wore a gray rochet loaded with scallop shells. Their caps of black silk had sundry little images of lead or pewter stuck about them, besides the scallop in front; whilst a chain, composed of straw, was thrown around their necks. Some carried in their hands a hollow walking-staff, which was so constructed as to be played upon like a flute, and beguiled their long and dreary journey to the holy shrine.

As the procession passed on, it afforded a spectacle calculated, together with the scenery, to please an admirer of such picturesque effects as can alone be found in a combination of animate and inanimate nature. The various mantles of the ecclesias-

tics, according to their several orders; the white draperies of the Carmelites, as they held aloft boxes of relics, or high silver crosses sparkling in the evening light; the groups of pilgrims amongst the trees, some singing, others playing on their long staves, or in little parties pausing to drink of the clear flood—combined to form the most enlivening picture, finished, as it were, by the boldness of the foreground: for there the red beams of the sun darted on the prominent parts of the rock we have before described, and, with more than alchymic liberality, changed into a thousand strings of diamonds the little streams of water, as they gushed, and strayed, and divided amidst the broken crags, till they at length united in the deep hollow of a natural basin that received them, ere they commenced their farther journey through the forest.

Near this spot sat the tall and imposing figure of Hassan, his tawny face glowing in the beams of the sun that shot direct upon it. The half-pleased, half-snarling countenance of Cassim was seen peeping over the shoulder of Hassan, as he exulted in his own smartness and wit, that had puzzled the more solid sense of his learned companion. Cassim pointed with outstretched hand and arm to the procession now advancing towards the rock. They were singing gay strains, accompanied by the not unpleasing melody of the walking flutes, for so might these musical staves be called. Cassim, as if continuing some discourse he had addressed to the Talba, said, "Why, I will tell thee, then; these are the pilgrims who go by the name of the Jacobipetæ, for no other reason than that they walk many miles afoot to say their prayers and do homage to him of Compostella in Spain, whom they call a saint, whilst at the same time they carry on some small traffic with their wares, in which they but over-reach their brother twice as much as they would at any other time, on the strength of their prayers and absolution at the shrine of St. James. Canst thou guess, Hassan, what they would have of thee?"

"Not I, truly," replied Hassan; "what know I of the infidel Nazarenes? Would that I could shut them out from my sight, and those carved blocks which I see some of them carrying. For what saith the prophet of Mecca? 'Allah is the true God, and the only God of man; and thou shalt neither hew, nor make any other gods with thy hands, nor honour them.'"

"Trust me, Hassan, those Nazarenes are no such foolish idolaters as you take them for. Their waxen images melt at the sight of money, like the heart of a covetous Algrade, and will grant a pardon to a sinner on the same terms that the

Portuguese judge doth to us Moors,—by being well paid for it. Seest thou not, by the images they hold up, that the leader, or begging friar, comes to ask an alms of thee?"

"Of me?" cried Hassan. "Alas! what should I give?"

"Anything; he will take it, I warrant me," said Cassim, "so it be gold, silver, or brass coin. He would put thy face into his pocket with as good will as if it were the Santo Sudario, so he could but coin thy copper visage into Portugal reis. But hush! here comes the begging friar."

At this moment several monks, who each carried an image more peculiarly devoted to the honour of St. James, came up and ranged themselves in a row before the Talba, with an evident design to lay upon him, by gentle force, a voluntary contribution; as, in the days of Alonso the Fourth, the same as in those of the renowned Don Quixote de la Mancha, the pilgrims of Compostella were, generally speaking, as arrant beggars, thieves, and knaves, as any to be found within this part of Europe.

"Give something to the holy St. James, in memory of his conversion!" cried a fat brother, who had a face as large and as red as the moon, when she rises like a ball of fire just above the horizon; and as he spoke he lifted up the image of a great fish surrounded by a net, an emblem of the holy apostle's original calling. "Give something to the fish!" again demanded the brother.

"Marry, with all my heart," answered Cassim; "I will give the fish that which shall be most acceptable—his own element, and here is the means in abundance. There is not a purer stream of water to be found in the mountains of Cintra." So saying, the cunning herdsman, with that low obeisance often affected by the Moors towards the Christians, and in particular to those they held secretly in contempt, bowed him down as if to take up in the palms of his hands, from the clear fountain, an ample sprinkling for the holy image.

"Dog of a Moor!" cried the brother; "dost thou dare to offer insult to the blessed image of the fish, sacred to St. James? Rather thank me, who, in brotherly charity, would allow thee to give something to mother church, and will not spit upon thy offering and cast it from him, as it would deserve, when proffered by the hand of an infidel."

"Most holy mollah of the faith of Issa Ben Marian," said Cassim; "how I admire thy zeal for St. James, which makes thee forget even the smaller matters of thy own order; for, if I mistake not, thou art a brother of St. Francis, who, as I

have been told, must not touch money, even when given to him. I would, in return for thy charity, put thee in remembrance of thy own vows."

"Most true," said the brother, not a wit abashed, "and strictly do we of the order keep those vows. For look ye, thou must drop thy offering in this leathern bag, whose mouth hangs open by my side. We brothers of St. Francis may neither touch nor take; wherefore we get some friendly hand, not fettered by like vows, to dip it into the product of the bag, and expend the same in deeds of charity for the church at our discretion."

"Scrupulous friar!" replied Cassim, "there is a proverb which I heard at Lisbon from the mouth of an English yeoman; it saith, 'Charity begins at home.' I doubt not it is well understood by thy order. I have nothing to give, being, as thou seest I am, a poor herdsman, a Moor, a taxed head, and therefore nothing better than a slave."

"But thou, old greybeard, thou wilt give something!" said a brisk young novice of the order of the Carmelites, who advanced in a gay step, swinging his long white sleeves, and holding up a pretty box, not unlike a show-box. Through a small piece of glass, placed by way of eyehole, might be seen a representation of the discovery of the body of St. James, buried at Compostella, and pointed out to the Bishop of Ira in the eighth century by angels, who were good enough to come down from heaven and hold torches to the bishop on that occasion. "Give something to those who have visited, in pain and toil, the blessed tomb and shrine of St. James," cried the Carmelite. "We beg for the poor and holy pilgrims just returned from Compostella, and travelling a far journey to their homes."

"Son," answered the Talba, rising and assuming that air of deep reverence he could sometimes put on when he deemed it necessary before his enemies—"son, I respect thy holy prophet St. James, or Boanerges, as he is called, for a wise and good man, who, I would say, if it be not over bold, was called a Son of Thunder, for having in him the qualities essential to a learned Talba, some acquaintance with the hidden mysteries and elements of creation. Knowing these things, reverence is due to the holy Boanerges of the Nazarenes, and that respect I will pay most freely, but to ask me for money is vain; for, know ye, holy fakirs and learned mollahs of the christians, that I am a Talba, a sage, one whose wealth lies in the knowledge of the heavenly bodies, in their revolutions,

their changes, and their eclipses. I am one who, by the words of wisdom found in the book of Truth, can shew to others the way where gold and silver shall spangle their path like stars in the firmament, but who never himself lays hand on what he indicates to others as worldly riches. I have nothing to give but wise counsels."

"And that being the last thing men are willing to take," said Cassim, "I would counsel you, reverend friars and begging pilgrims of St. James of Compostella, to pass on your way as fast as you can; seeing that unless you do so, as the town of Cintra is filling with strangers of all kinds and degrees, who come to witness the great bull-fight about to take place, you will be puzzled to get lodging for such a company. The hospital and the convents, I hear, are nearly filled, and that to overflow."

The friars, beggars, and pilgrims, seemed to take the denial given to them much better than was, perhaps, expected by the Talba or the cunning Cassim; for in nothing did the Christians more cruelly oppress the Moors, than by making free with their purses on any pretext of enforcing charity for the good of the church. In justice, however, to our honest friends Hassan and Cassim, let us say they had really little or nothing to give. The grievous tax laid on those Moors who were suffered to remain and support themselves by labour in Portugal, after they had been driven from nearly every town or city in the kingdom, was so oppressive to a people on whom burthens of every kind were laid, that it may readily be believed they had scarcely enough to supply their own wants, and little to bestow on others.

Perhaps, too, the pilgrims were not much above the common order, and therefore used less insolence towards the Moors than they might have experienced from those whose fortune and station bore them out in whatever ill usage they chose to adopt towards a depressed and despised race of beings. Scarcely had the pilgrims departed, and their voices died away in the distance as they continued their path through the wood, when another object attracted the attention, and, indeed, excited the curiosity of Cassim. It was a pilgrim; but one who followed the procession rather than joined it.

He was not afoot, like the rest, but mounted on a mule; an animal fat, sleek, and comely, whose steady equal pace, and eye fixed on every inch of ground that lay before his nose as he paced on his way, shewed that it was one of those creatures bred to pass mountain defiles and dangerous precipices. The

mule's head was dressed with party-coloured ribbons—red, blue, yellow, and green, which crowned him like a nosegay stuck between his ears. A parcel of little silver bells were suspended round the neck, and jingled on the bridle rein. And to shew that he had borne his master company on a holy errand, the scallop shell, with a little image of a saint formed of silver, stood erect above the forehead, amidst the ribbons which adorned this quiet and sure-footed beast. Upon his back was seated a man who wore the pilgrim's rochet, rosary, scrip, straw chain, and the noted escallop on the front and shoulders of his gown; but whether he were young or old, handsome or ugly, gentle or simple, could not be readily determined, as over the black silk cap was thrown an ample hood, which, either to protect the pilgrim from the dust or the warm beams of the sun, was so brought over his face that little could be discovered of it but the eyes.

As the pilgrim rode towards the rock where Cassim and Hassan had held the late discourse with his companions, he slackened his pace, and appeared to come on with the intent of speaking to them.

"Holy prophet!" exclaimed Hassan; "see if there be not another beggar who comes to ask alms! A plague on these knaves! When shall we be rid of them and their mummery?"

"Nay, I think thou judgest not rightly, wise Talba," said Cassim: "this pilgrim seems to be a stray sheep from the flock gone on before; and as he bears no fish, no net for St. James, as did the Franciscan, 'tis like enough he means not to hook us into it. I should judge that pilgrim to be a wiser man than his brethren, inasmuch as he walks on the four legs of a mule and spares his own. See, if he does not turn the creature's head this way, and comes to offer speech to us."

"A good even to you, my masters!" said the pilgrim, as he slightly inclined his head in token of salutation.

"Servants, Sir Pilgrim, were the better term," replied Cassim: "our people leave the name of masters with those who have beat down their swords."

"Thou hast a quick wit, friend," said the pilgrim; "and I would so far tax it, as to help me to the nearest road to the hospital of the Knights of Avis."

"The heels of your mule will be all-sufficient to accomplish such a purpose," answered Cassim, "if you urge them forward with your riding wand; else will you hardly reach the royal hospital of Avis ere the moon, like a careful nurse, rises to watch, whilst her lord the sun lies abed till morning. The hospital of Avis is three leagues off."

"Three leagues off!" exclaimed the pilgrim: "this animal is jaded. I know not the road. I shall never reach the end of it."

"Assuredly not, if you stand still upon it," answered Cassim; "but tired mules and ignorant men would do much greater things than ride three leagues by moonlight, were a brother of the question at their heels.* Your companions are gone on for Cintra. After them, pilgrim, and I will warrant me you will all of you find a lodgment together."

"But suppose, my quick-tongued friend," said the pilgrim, "that I should not be able to find my companions: what must I do then?"

"Marry," replied Cassim, "there is no danger of that mischance. Follow where you see the folks running out, and especially the women, to stare at the strange sight as it passes on. The very dogs, as they bark after it, will point out to you where goes the procession. And, if you hear a jingling of bells, a piping of flutes, and a begging of every poor wretch a reis for St. James, by way of burthen to some wanton song, be sure of it the pilgrims who go on before are those of Compostella."†

"In sooth, thy words, I grieve to say it, speak the truth," said the mounted and muffled pilgrim. "The scandalous manners of some of my mates have been one cause of my lagging behind, and I care not to join company again this night—nay, I have some mind to sojourn with you."

"For the love of us both do not," cried Cassim; "we shall make as ill company as thy good manners would with the evil ones of the beggars for St. James. If you go with me, you will find but a poor supper after a long journey; and I shall find none, if you eat even that. We shall, therefore, both be dissatisfied. And what says the old Spanish proverb? 'Better one bellyful than two tickled mouths.' Our home, Sir Pilgrim, is almost an empty house, for we serve one nearly as poor as ourselves."

"Nay, but you know the law," answered the pilgrim; "I can enforce my request; and I would do so, but—"

"What law?" inquired Hassan, who now spoke for the first time, having maintained a solemn silence whilst the flippant tongue and grinning mouth of Cassim had never stood still.

* An officer employed in the punishment of false pilgrims and heretics.

† Should our readers feel desirous to learn a more full account of the pilgrims of Compostella, we would refer them to "British Monachism," the excellent work of that learned antiquary, the Rev. T. D. Fosbroke; an author to whom we are indebted for much curious information.

"Some Moors of Granada have committed a great outrage," said the pilgrim; "they have set upon, beaten, and robbed a noble company of high-born pilgrims on their way to Compostella. Therefore, as some penalty for the crime of these infidels, a law has been enacted, that every Moor, living at peace under the dominion of any Christian prince, either in Spain or Portugal, shall be obliged to lodge and entertain any single pilgrim, or company of pilgrims, of Compostella, free of all cost. So runs this law, which has received the approval of His Holiness the Pope."

"His Holiness is most merciful, truly," said Cassim; "for the sins of a few, he has sanctioned a punishment to be laid on many; doubtless to lessen, by division, the burthen deserved by the original offenders."

"Not so," answered the pilgrim; "should these infidel wretches, who robbed the nobles going to Compostella, be taken, they will be burnt alive for having laid hands on such persons whilst engaged on a holy errand. The offence is equal to heresy in our church. In such cases, neither His Holiness, nor the patriarch who represents him here, can shew mercy."

"Give me anything but the Pope's mercy," cried Cassim, who, hating all Christians, took every opportunity, even at his own risk, to revile and disparage the priesthood of Rome, from the highest to the lowest; and more than once had he stood in danger for such liberties: "I once saw his mercy bestowed on a Moor," continued the bold herdsman, "a prince of Fez, who landed at Cadiz, and burned a church with nobody in it. He was made prisoner, however, after his exploit, by the Christians. The prince Ali Ahmed was rich, so he gave gold, silver, and pearls, to Rome, to save his life. He you call the Pope promised not to touch it."

"And His Holiness kept his word, no doubt," said the pilgrim.

"That he did, but in his own way," answered Cassim; "for I will not touch thy life, said the Pope. So he shut prince Ahmed up in prison, and there gave him nothing to eat. The prince died of starvation. But all the priests swore their Pope had no hand in his death, inasmuch as it came naturally. Oh, the wisdom of you Christians! It is more obscure, and yet brings mightier things to pass, than old Hassan's star-gazing speculations."

"Speak not thus irreverently of the great and infallible father of our church," said the pilgrim; "whatever he does

must be right, seeing that he cannot, as the successor of St. Peter, do wrong. But you Moors are ever thus free with your tongues, when you fear no immediate resentment: however, this is not the matter of our debate. Will you," he continued, addressing the Talba, "will you give me lodgment for this night? I were unwilling to force hospitality, though I might do so."

"Most holy pilgrim of Compostella," replied Hassan, as he rose to answer with all the gravity of the East, "the fowls of the air gather them round the full ear, but leave the chaff for the wind. Even so a hungry man seeketh a house well stored, and leaveth that which is empty to desolation. We are too poor to entertain you."

"But I see a fine yielding of milk in yonder vessel," observed the pilgrim, as if not altogether crediting the assertions of extreme poverty pleaded by the Moors to get rid of him; "and I will venture to say thou hast some barley bread, a meal pottage, or what not, to keep it company. I am no monk of a royal foundation, that I should be dainty of diet; anything will serve me. So I will home with you, and for once rest under the roof of a Moor. It will be the first time I have trespassed on infidel hospitality."

"And the last, if my wishes avail," muttered Cassim. But, fearful of giving serious offence, he added, in a voice that was loud enough for a crier of the Muezzin, "Welcome, then, pilgrim, if thou wilt force a welcome."

"What means that infidel?" said the pilgrim, in a somewhat angry tone; "do you dare, dog of a Moor! to——"

Here Hassan interposed. "Pilgrim of Compostella," he said, "despise not him whom thou callest infidel, and who is about to feed thee; since Allah sends thee to his roof. For what says thy own Scripture of the prophet of thy people called Elijah? received he not food from a raven, as well as from an angel? and did it not nourish him; and he spurned not the means, but was thankful. Follow me."

Hassan placed his parchments beneath the folds of his robe, took up a walking-staff that lay by his side, and was about to lead the way.

"Stay a while," said the pilgrim: "I have a follower who lingers somewhere in this forest. He will join me anon. He did but leave me to examine where the cross-road leads to on the other side yonder knoll."

So saying, the pilgrim turned round the mule, and rode forward a few paces towards the knoll. He applied a small

silver whistle to his lips, and blew with it a shrill summons. The call was speedily answered by a halloo from the woods hard by; and soon after, a young, stout-built, somewhat bold-looking man, mounted also on a mule, issued forth, and instantly rode towards the pilgrim.

Hassan and Cassim interchanged looks. In that of the former there was doubt; in the glance of the latter, intelligence and caution. Hassan bowed slightly as the new comrade advanced. Cassim eyed him from head to foot with one look, and then put his hand on his girdle, to feel that his long-bladed knife was secure and ready.

"Forward!" said the pilgrim, the moment his companion joined him, and had fallen into the rear like a menial.

Hassan led the way, while Cassim acted the part of a modern light-infantry man, and by sundry flying movements watched the guests who had so strangely intruded themselves for the night on Moorish hospitality; since he could not help suspecting there might be other pilgrims of the same description at hand, to follow up the first intruders. Cassim, therefore, now would glide to the side of the stranger, addressing to him some discourse about the mule; then would he pause, and linger behind, to gather wild plants, or practise any other manœuvre that occurred, by which he might best confirm or dispel his suspicions. No one, however, appeared; and as Hassan conducted the little cavalcade up a long avenue of old trees that led to the habitation of Aza Anzurez, a stately pile of buildings, whose outline was distinctly seen as it stood duskily towering against the clouds, met the eye of the strangers.

The sun was set. Scarcely a dying tint of golden light could be traced in the horizon, and all was gradually sinking into the solemn darkness of night, when Hassan advanced to an outward gate of the building, and striking loudly upon it with the walking-staff he held in his hand, a hollow sound ran echoing round the walls, and proclaimed the desolation that was within them.

CHAPTER III.

The troop is past: come, pilgrim, I will bring you
Where you shall host:
——————— I humbly thank you;
Please it this matron.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE building which afforded a refuge to the family of Aza Anzurez was an ancient and ruined pile. It had once been a palace belonging to the Moors, ere they were driven from the neighbourhood of Cintra, after the conquest of Lisbon by Alonso the First. It was now but the ruin of a ruin—a place where none but the poor or despised would seek shelter. Still, however dilapidated, the massive walls, the fallen pillars, and decaying arches, gave sufficient indications of the grandeur and strength of the whole when in its original state, before the exterminating hand of war had laid its iron grasp upon the works as well as the lives of men.

The old Moorish palace stood on one of those level spaces of ground which abound amidst the wild and rocky eminences of Cintra. The entrance was in tolerable preservation, and consisted of a gateway formed of three semicircular arches. It was overshadowed by the dark boughs of pine-trees and elms of great antiquity. These, with the ruined walls and towers that stood darkly against the sky, and in parts shewed it through their broken apertures, combined to give a melancholy air to the spot. Towards evening it was more apparent; for then the immense rocks that rose near the palace could alone be seen in their bold outline, adding a character of awe and solemnity to the scene; so much do objects of bulk impress the senses when they are half hid in gloom, and the imagination is left to consider them in their magnitude, without being able to supply their detail but by conjecture.

In those watch-towers and battlements where once the sentinel had paced his round as he watched the stars in their courses, the bird of night now kept his vigils; and many a bird of prey also had succeeded as an inhabitant of those walls, where tyrants, too often in days of old had held their sway. Long and vacant passages served, like the harp of Eolus, to

make melancholy music with the winds, as they murmured through the vaulted roofs; grass and brambles grew high and wild; and a marble fountain (a luxury generally found in Moorish buildings) stood within the inner court. It was dilapidated, moss-grown, and neglected; though its cool and gentle plashings still broke the silence of desolation, which reigned around, with a murmur that called up pleasing yet pensive feelings: indeed, so much does the action of water possess the character of a being endowed with life, that no place can strictly be called a solitude where there is a falling or a running stream.

Over the gateway might be seen an inscription in Arabic, nearly illegible from time. A kind of open gallery, like a cloister, once surrounded the inner court. The pillars which supported it had, for the greater part, been removed, probably to supply materials for some more modern buildings, so that little was left; yet what pillars and capitals remained were of the finest jasper—a circumstance sufficient in itself to shew the former magnificence of the place. The architecture of the pile was the Saracenic—a style in which richness was combined with strength, whilst eastern lightness displayed itself in the ornamental parts. Few of these now remained. It was the massive walls, the high and stubborn towers, that seemed to resist the hand of time as well as of conquest, which gave that air of grandeur to the place, so calculated to raise the mind of the beholder to an elevated train of thought, as, in the lonely extent, the deep silence of a building once so animated with the presence of man, memory busied itself in recalling those ages which, marked by his actions, had become celebrated: yet nothing now was left of those who founded this majestic pile. Their very names, like the glories of the ancient Moorish race, were fast sinking into oblivion; and even their fame—that breath which sustains the spirit of the brave when their own breath is departing—was now passing away, to become as hushed as the surrounding scene of desolation.

It was through the gateway of this ancient building that the pilgrim and his attendant entered, on the door being opened by a little Moorish girl about twelve years old. Whilst Hassan preceded them, Cassim brought up the rear, and the whole party moved onward across the inner court or quadrangle, leading to that portion of the building which, being least ruinous, was therefore now inhabited by the Moors. The deepening gloom prevented the objects around from being

clearly distinguished; but many a stately tower, and many a little cupola—the favourite termination in Moorish architecture—could be distinguished amid the solemn gray of twilight, like monuments of departed grandeur. Notwithstanding the gloom, the pilgrim seemed to look at every thing he passed with the searching eye of curiosity; and, probably, the vast extent of the ruined palace might create surprise not unallied to awe: for there is something highly imposing to the mind and chilling to the heart, in the suspension of feeling between pleasure and fear, excited by traversing ruins vast, unknown, and half hidden by the darkness of the hour.

The little company, after having crossed the inner court, where the fountain stood in the centre, at length entered a large hall. In times past it might have been devoted to banqueting. The roof in many places had fallen in, and shewed the blue of upper air through the apertures. The windows, which had been numerous, were so high as nearly to reach the ceiling. There was no glass in them; but the richly carved mullions and the light shafts still remained entire. Ivy and brambles had found sufficient nourishment to grow in several places about the walls. It had once been paved with various coloured tiles; but now most of them were broken, destroyed, or covered with earth and weeds.

As they paced across the hall, they heard their own footsteps run in hollow echoes, as if they traversed the vaults and crypts devoted to the dead, whose remains lay mouldering beneath their sculptured stones. The strangers and their Moorish guides observed a profound silence, which no one seemed disposed to break. In the pilgrim, perhaps, it might proceed from some gloomy thoughts connected with his own feelings and situation; since the manner in which he had shunned the other pilgrims, when about to enter Cintra, and had sought, or rather forced himself on the hospitality of poor and oppressed infidels, had in it something out of the common order of occurrences. Hassan and Cassim thought so: and their silence might, in the one, proceed from reflection; in the other, from a cautious and observing spirit, that suspects perils in order to prepare for them.

Be this as it may, the little maid, who acted the part of porteress, and had unbarred the outward gate, now bounded forward with a step as light as that of the wild gazelle. Applying her feeble force to a door which stood under a low-browed arch, at the end of the hall, it opened instantly, and shewed, by a red gleam of light which streamed on the walls

from a fire that burnt within, a chamber in tolerable preservation, and which apparently was generally occupied by the family. It was lofty: the walls had been covered with a cement composed of lime and sand, called tapia. On the surface might still be seen, in parts very perfect, Arabesque devices painted and gilt: the peacock, so favourite an ornament with the Moors, being repeatedly introduced; here in profile, there in front, now with a full-spread tail, and again with a chain of gold about its neck. Extracts, in Arabic, from the Koran, were also seen in regular compartments. The ceiling, likewise, had been carved and gilt; though these decorations were now almost obscured by the dusky hue which time and decay had spread upon them. Nothing else in this chamber retained the least signs of former magnificence; as the seats were formed out of the roots of the cork-tree, and a rude table, on which stood a lamp, a few mats spread on the ground, with the addition of some household utensils, composed the entire furniture.

Yet, however simple the room or the character of its inhabitants, had Murillo or Velasquez then been in existence, they would have found in it a fine subject for the pencil. On a low hearth, a few lighted brands were smouldering into embers; as, in so warm a climate, fire was rarely necessary but for the culinary purposes of life. On the embers were seen two flat earthen plates, between which a sort of bread or cakes, made without leaven, were being baked for the evening repast. The light of the fagots cast a broad gleam on a group of figures so striking, that even the pilgrim paused a moment to contemplate it ere he passed over the threshold of the door.

Aza Anzurez was seen seated near the hearth. Her son Hamet had thrown himself on the ground at her feet. At the moment the stranger entered the apartment, the majestic figure of Aza was bent over her son. Yet her head was raised, as if she had looked up to heaven in accompaniment to some thought to which her lips had just given utterance. Her high forehead—her arched brow—her full eye, brilliant in its darkness—her lips, which, slightly parted, shewed the pearly whiteness of her teeth,—were all of the highest order of beauty; and the noble expression of her countenance could not be seen without exciting admiration and respect. She now had no turban on her head; and her sable hair fell on her neck and bosom in unbound locks, rich in their profusion. Her well turned arms were cast round the neck of

her son, who, resting his own upon his mother's knees, looked up in her face as he listened with tenderness and delight to the accents that fell from her tongue.

Aza was a Moor, the daughter of a despised people, an infidel; whose race was then considered, by every true Christian, as accursed of God. Yet Aza was so excellent in those qualities derived from nature, that, by personal desert, she was not unworthy to have ruled, as a queen, the very palace, even in its proudest days, where she now sought shelter amid its ruins. The stranger bowed his head, with every mark of reverence, as he entered the chamber.

"A Christian pilgrim," said he, "noble Moor, this night asks hospitality and shelter under your roof."

This address, and the request which accompanied it, recalled, perhaps, to the mind of Aza some past circumstances of her life, the recollection of which struck on her feelings, this memorable night, with peculiar pain. She withdrew her hands from Hamet's neck, and seemed to shudder at the mention of hospitality being demanded by a Christian. Her son started, and suddenly rose up as she turned to confront the stranger. Aza exerted herself to assume composure, and answered in a dignified manner, yet coldly, "that the Moors, who, like herself, lived on sufferance in the land of their conquerors, had no power to refuse what the Christian might please to demand."

The pilgrim probably felt some touch of compassion for the unhappy condition of Aza, which these few words had plainly enough declared; and he assured her that the hospitality he had asked for the night, he wished to receive as an act of kindness, for which he should feel indebted to her, and not as one of compulsion: weariness, and the fatigue of a long journey, he also pleaded as an excuse for the intrusion.

"Rest you, and welcome," said Aza. "The wayfarer and wanderer by night shall never be turned from the door of Aza Anzurez, whilst she has bread or a cup to offer for his refreshment. However much she may have once suffered by a treacherous guest, the wanderer shall never pass her gate, and curse the bolt that shuts him out to the night dew, to hunger, and the wolf of the forest. Allah sends sun and rain alike on the Christian and the Moor; so should bread and shelter be common to both in the hour of need. Sit, Christian; doff thy cloak, and cheer thee even in this house of sorrow. I am one who, like a parted soul, wanders weeping till the hour be

come that shall join it again to its earthly partner.* I am the widow of Alcanzor—a name known to the brave. And yonder boy—the fresh branch of this withered tree—he is my son. Hamet, bid the Christian welcome; for welcome is that which makes the homely cup refreshing, and his simple repast to seem sweet to the traveller's lips."

"Welcome, pilgrim," said Hamet, in obedience to his mother's command—"and doubly welcome," added the young sharif on his own score, "if you bring news with you of distant lands. I love to sit and hear tidings of worlds that are unknown to me. My heart beats thick, and my very blood boils in my veins, when I hear a tale of gallant battle, and of those far countries that lie beyond the seven oceans of the earth. What news canst thou tell us? So thy tale be one to cheer my dear mother, for this day has been a dark one to the memory of her soul, I will thank thee gratefully; and to-morrow morning, if you like the sport, I will shew you where the game lies in the thicket, and with what springe the cock of the wood may be surest caught. But stay till my mother returns; she is but gone to prepare the supper for thee. Little Zora helps her, now that she has no other attendant; yet once my mother had a hundred maids, well born and bred, for her bower-women."

"Your mother then has been unfortunate, my gentle youth," said the pilgrim in a good-natured manner, as he replied to the eager and rambling discourse of young Hamet; "yet she looks calm. In her majestic deportment, there is nothing of that depression which generally follows a great and violent change of fortune."

"Good pilgrim of Compostella," said Hassan, who was seated cross-legged upon a mat near the stranger, and had composed himself with much gravity to take his part in the social hour, "she is now in a more composed frame of mind, for her misfortunes are not young and new to her. Her soul is in the calm of sorrow, not in its storm. Aza Anzurez is as a raging torrent, which, having passed in tumult its tremendous fall, so soon as it reaches the valley glides onward in peace. Calamity is better borne when it becomes habitual, than at the moment of its ebullition."

"True," replied the stranger; "it is like those convulsions in a state, which, during their revolution, produce rebellion and outrage in the whole frame of government, yet, when

* The Mahometan faith teaches the doctrine of the Resurrection.

accomplished, often settle into the calm of lasting peace; the old evils having passed off with the storm."

"You know something of states, it should seem, by that observation," said Hamet, his eyes glittering with curiosity and expectation. "Can you tell us aught of that brave kingdom which struggles for liberty? Castile I mean, that would shake a tyrant from his throne. I wish well to that people, though they be Christians and enemies to the Moors; for their struggle is for freedom; they would cast off the yoke."

"The beast that is unused to the yoke," said the herdsman Cassim, who now ventured to speak for the first time, "will struggle hard to be rid of it. But after a while it is easily borne; for, let it pinch his neck never so sharply, by habit he ceases to feel it. Even such is slavery. When the Castilians have got used to the yoke which king Pedro—he they call the Cruel—has prepared for their necks, they will not heed it, or at least bear their burthen in silence."

"By the tomb of the Holy Prophet!" cried Hamet, "thou speakest, Cassim, but truth, though in thy rude way. Even so is it with our degraded people. We kiss the rod—we bear in silence the burthen of our masters, as if bondage were our birthright, and we would hug it to our hearts. Wherefore do we bear this? For life! for that worthless thing called life, which without liberty is death. Every minute of it our tyrants may reckon by the sand-glass; as in their hands is our date of being; to close it is at their will. I would rather be a wild boy of the desert, and range it in my native freedom, than live cooped within these old walls on the sufferance of my oppressors."

"You speak boldly for one so young," observed the pilgrim; "and it is well for thy ardent spirit that no one hears thy words, who would give account of them where they might be weighed in the balance and found wanting in duty to the state. Young man, a pilgrim has little to give but thanks to his entertainers. To mine I would add this counsel, that, in times when danger lurks unseen by night as well as walks in open day, you would speak with more caution such feelings as it is hazardous to reveal."

"I care not," said Hamet eagerly; "my father left me nothing but his sword; and I have learnt that which would excuse me did I buckle it on."

"Foolish boy!" said the Talba; "you talk of hazarding life! you talk of buckling on a sword! Look, yonder is your mother; think of her."

Hamet bent his head, as if conscience-struck by a reproof he so well deserved.

"And remember, noble sharif," cried Cassim, "that a man may as well hang a spit on his thigh as a sword, if he knows not how to use it. I think you have yet practised on nothing but deer, boars, wild ducks, and the pretty fowls that fly about in the forest, to furnish you with a supper; and do you talk of using a sword? First arm against a quintain."

It would be impossible to describe the high and haughty glance which Hamet darted on Cassim, in answer to this sarcastic remark on the young man's allusion to his sword. Hamet's lips quivered with indignation, and he raised his clenched hand as if about to accompany the bitter reply that hung on them with a blow. But his eye caught the sight of his mother, as she was returning into the apartment; and the sight of Aza, in one moment, changed the angry aspect of her son to brightness. He remembered this was to her a day of sacred sorrow; would he then add to it a single pang from any cause? The thought rushed on him quick as light, at her approach. His upraised hand dropped, as it were mechanically by his side; his lips were in the act to speak reproof to Cassim; now not a sound escaped them. Watchful, attentive, and affectionate, the dutiful son was in another instant at his mother's side, gentle and tractable as the young bird when the parent dove would first teach it to spread its wings.

The frugal repast was soon prepared. Fresh milk, that Cassim had brought home from his goats, stood in a large oaken bowl. The cakes were taken hot from the hearth; and the delicious fruits of Portugal added even luxury to the board. Animal food there was none; nor did the repast boast of wild fowl; for Hamet had this day neglected his forest sports, to devote his time, on the anniversary of his father's death, to his mother. And though she had attempted to visit the grave alone, Hamet's watchful eye was upon her steps, and he had followed them in love and duty. As abstinence was a religious act with the Moors on occasions of sorrow, this simple repast was the first tasted by Aza, or her son, since the commencement of the day.

The little Moorish damsel brought a pitcher of water from a neighbouring spring. Its extreme purity and coldness shewed the source whence it came to have been embedded within rocks and deep caverns inaccessible to the beams of the sun. It was to this primitive supper that Aza now welcomed her christian guest. His companion, whose respectful

observance of the pilgrim intimated him to be of inferior rank, sat apart from him; and though the answers he gave to the cunning inquiries of Cassim did not actually declare his station, still they were sufficient to make the wily Moor set him down as a follower or varlet, who had attended the holy stranger on his religious journey to Compostella.

Whatever doubts or fears had at first beset the minds of Hassan and Cassim respecting the Christian traveller, and the strange manner in which he had forced himself on their hospitality, those doubts and fears gave way to a better opinion, as the pilgrim unbent in familiar discourse; and, far from shewing that insolence of manner to the Moors which every good Catholic might have pleaded holy church itself to sanction, he was courteous, and even respectful, in his address and demeanour both to the young sharif and his mother.

Whilst Aza Anzurez, her son, the Talba, and the pilgrim, partook together of the repast, Cassim and the Christian follower, with the little Moorish Zora, sat apart at another rude table, which was also furnished with a share of the supper; thus observing, even in the midst of poverty and ruin, those distinctions of condition practised in every nation and every age of the world. This, surely, were a proof sufficient in itself to convict of absurdity those levellers who, in society, would reduce all orders to one equality, and, by so doing, would destroy the very distinctions man has received from the favour of his Creator: removing all landmarks of respect, protection, and dependence; confounding with the meaner those who, by their superior station, become, like the head to the members of the body, guides to the less elevated, but equally useful, members of society at large. Well-regulated orders, like the parts of a great machine, produce the harmony of the whole, so that they work well together. Destroy them, or substitute equality, and disorder and outrage will infallibly ensue.

It was probably from some conviction of the kind that Aza still maintained in her own household this shadow of distinction; it was, in fact, little else, in her forlorn condition. Long service, his former station, and the keen sense of Cassim, rendered him a favoured, and, as we have lately seen, a familiar attendant of the Moor and her son. Though they ate therefore at different tables, yet this distinction did not extend so far as to lay a chain on the lips of Cassim; for he listened to what passed with attention, asked frequent questions of the pilgrim, and offered his own remarks as freely as did the Talba himself.

The pilgrim, by his discourse, seemed to be a man well acquainted with general subjects, and one who had the good taste to know how to apply his knowledge. He framed his manners and his conversation with singular attention to the several characters present, so as to please all; a circumstance which, alone, bespoke a quick and shrewd observer. When addressing himself to Aza, he spoke in a tone of conciliation, almost of sadness; as he well knew that no voice falls so sweetly on the ear of the unfortunate as that which harmonises with their own feelings. With Cassim, he condescended to talk good humouredly, and in a manner which shewed him to be not unacquainted with those subjects familiar to the herdsman. Young Hamet's desire to be informed respecting other countries and governments, he gratified with information which evinced sense and observation, and that the interest of states was not unknown to him. Even Hassan felt pleased by learning that the pilgrim reverenced the science of astronomy, and the superior skill of the Arabian physician or philosopher.

There is nothing more likely to enhance the value of a guest, than to find preconceived misconceptions of his character removed by his own affability and good conduct. Such was the case in the present instance; for the Moors, who at first had entertained the worst suspicions of the extraordinary person who sought hospitality at their hands, now, by a sudden change of feeling, which is apt to run into extremes, were induced to believe that some very distinguished Christian, learned both in arts and arms, and perhaps nobly born, was shrouded beneath the humble guise of a wayfaring devotee.

One thing, however, puzzled Hassan, and excited the prying curiosity of Cassim: it was that, though the pilgrim had in some measure removed the close muffling which so completely concealed his face and head, yet he evidently did not wish to be very closely observed, as he still kept on the hood. It was loosened in front, so as to allow him to partake of the simple repast set before him; yet it very much shrouded his face, and in such a manner as would induce the belief that, on exchanging the pilgrim's dress for any other of a more open fashion, it would be difficult to recognise the wearer. Hassan, during the whole time of supper, eyed him very closely, listened with profound attention to every word that fell from his lips, and said little himself. Aza and Hamet also noticed the evident design of the pilgrim to conceal his person as much as possible; but the high-born Moors were remarkable

for that native politeness which emanates from a wish to avoid giving pain to the feelings of another. The pilgrim was gracious in his manners and discourse to them. A reciprocal kindness taught them not to notice what their guest desired to conceal. On this account, therefore, they shunned rather than sought any jealous observation of his countenance.

At length the discourse turned on the frequency of pilgrimages made to Compostella from all parts of Europe; when, the stranger having casually remarked the perils that threatened travellers from the banditti who haunted the mountainous pass of Texillo, which lies between Portugal and Spain, Hamet inquired, "Of whom were these banditti composed? were they Moor or Christian?"

"Christian," answered the pilgrim; "though some Moors have lately joined them."

"Ay," said Hamet, "such is the consequence of oppression. Many are the Moors who now, like wolves and foxes, hide them amid caves and rocks, to avoid their conquerors; but if they hunt us like wild beasts of the forest, can it be matter of wonder if they make us turn on them for prey? Alas! when I think of those gallant men who bit the dust in doing honourable battle by my father's side, I grieve to see those who remain—I grieve to witness the present condition of our people; so sunk, so abject, so enslaved in soul as well as body. Our conquerors have hated us; they have persecuted—driven us on with goads of iron, till too many of us have become mean, selfish, cunning, dissembling; as if the only weapons left, with which we could meet the Christian, were such base arts as these. This last impost laid on us by Alonso the Fourth (I cannot give him his title of the Brave; for a brave victor kills with the sword, not by slow tortures like these); this last impost will crush to the very earth the lingering spirit of the Moorish people."

"What impost?" inquired the pilgrim.

"You should be a stranger, then, to Portugal," replied Hamet, "not to know that we are now, like oxen and sheep, numbered by the head: some sold into foreign lands as slaves; some bound to the oar of the galleys; whilst those who, like us, remain, have a tax laid on them for being suffered to breathe the air of Portugal in what they call freedom! We labour for our masters; we gain a hard-earned pittance, that they may wrest it from us; for, failing in payment of the tax, gyves, the whip, and the prison, are our portion."

"By whose counsel," asked the pilgrim, "has Alonso be-

come thus severe to the Moors who dwell in peace in his kingdom? His father, king Denis, dealt more mercifully by them."

"Nay, probably by his own counsel," said Hassan; "for Alonso needs no instigator of hard measures to the vanquished Moors. Yet some men say he was advised to this by his son Don Pedro, the infant of Portugal, and heir-apparent to the crown."

"Don Pedro," said Aza, "has been to our unhappy people, what Pedro of Castile is now to his own subjects—the Cruel. There is scarcely a Moorish widow, or a fatherless boy, but the one points to Alonso, and the other to Pedro, as the destroyer of the husband and the father. They have slain and conquered our people, and now they persecute the remnant that is left. I have heard, but I know not if it be truth, that the prince was the man who suggested this last impost, in the hope to drive from Estremadura the few Moors who remain in it."

The Talba now spoke. "There are those," said he, "would fain make it appear, that whatever Don Pedro does amiss, it arises not so much from his own will as from the influence of certain Castilians—enemies to the fallen Moors—who would make him the instrument to crush our unhappy people. Such aver that the chief counsellor of Don Pedro is a Castilian lady, on whom they rest the blame of all his acts. If the charge be false or true I know not."

"And who is this lady?" inquired the pilgrim. "His beloved princess Constantia has long been dead, I know. Who, in the shape of that seductive being, woman, can now influence his actions either to good or evil?"

"Donna Ines de Castro," replied Hassan; "unless men greatly defame her."

"Ines de Castro!" exclaimed the pilgrim in a tone of voice that thrilled every ear with its high and vehement sound. The cup of fair water which he held at this moment shook with the trembling of his hand; and though his countenance could not be distinctly seen, yet it was not so entirely hidden, but, from under the deep shade of his projecting hood, the quivering of his lip and the convulsive movement of the muscles of his face might be perceived, in spite of studied concealment. "Ines de Castro!" repeated the pilgrim in a lower voice, as if the name dropped unconsciously from his lips; "I will not believe it."

"Yet it is much noised abroad," continued Hassan, who did

not choose to notice, though he observed the agitation of the stranger. "Ines de Castro is said to hold Don Pedro of Portugal in such bonds of affection as never woman, though fair as the houri of Paradise, has yet had the power to do with man. She to him is like the sun to the earth, that would have no life unless he shone upon it."

"I never heard—I did not know this," said the pilgrim, with some confusion of manner.

"You are a stranger," answered Hassan, "to what passes at the court of Portugal, not to have heard of the growing power of the De Castro family. It is attributed entirely to the influence of Donna Ines; and, as I am assured, it is already a subject of much jealousy to the courtiers and nobles of this kingdom."

"Is Donna Ines, then, married to the prince?" said the pilgrim in a low but distinct voice.

"Married!" cried Cassim, who had repeatedly, during the evening, taken his share in the discourse: "Oh, no! the christian prince, in that particular, imitates our Moslem rulers. He thinks a favourite mistress quite as agreeable as a wedded queen; and he has built for her a palace equal in splendour to the harem of the famous Saladin of Syria."

"It is false!" exclaimed the pilgrim with warmth; "it is false as hell! Donna Ines was a virtuous lady, the only daughter of a noble house of Castile. Her father fled hither with her, to avoid that death which Pedro the Cruel had destined for him."

"You seem to know the history of this lady, good pilgrim," said Hamet, "before she came to Portugal, much better than it is known here. I never heard that Donna Ines de Castro's father had fled from the court of Castile to save his life. She is, I am told, the most beautiful woman that was ever seen. I should like to see this concubine of one of the christian tyrants."

"Concubine!" murmured the pilgrim; "surely it is not so —or, if it be, then is no woman true."

"The poet Zohair," said Hassan, "who wrote somewhat bitterly on woman, compared her virtue to the icicle, which only remains unbroken in its crystal purity till the first warm sunbeam, like the love of man, shines upon it, and melts the frozen gem with its ardour."

"Yet surely Donna Ines may be no such fragile gem," said the pilgrim. "The world talks freely of the actions of princes; and too often is the fame of a fair and innocent

creature the price of that notice which, paid by a prince, whilst it gratifies pride, makes a wreck of reputation: such may now be the consequence of Don Pedro's notice of a fair Castilian lady."

"Then I say," cried Cassim, "if such be the truth, Don Pedro's notice is not to be envied by any Nazarene maiden among them. And, indeed, he keeps this favourite Donna Ines very like those birds which, because they are favourites, are denied their liberty, and have their wings clipped as the first token of regard, and sometimes get their eyes put out that they may sing the sweeter. She is immured within the walls of the new dwelling erected for her by the prince at Cintra; and is seldom seen to come forth from her gilded cage, except it be to prayers that are said in the little conven she has endowed at the back of her own palace. It stands hard by, in the wood. She has filled it with Castilian damsels."

"And her brothers and father?" said the pilgrim.

"Her brothers are great men," replied Hassan: "each is made the commander of a citadel. Her father is great too; an ambassador, a governor, I know not what: but strange things are told of him."

"Yet none so strange, surely," said the pilgrim, "as that he should countenance his daughter's infamy. I will not believe it; there cannot be one word of truth in the tale; for I know not the man who was prouder of the honour of his house than old Don Manuel de Castro. Let us dimiss this theme; for what is it to us with whom fame unites in bonds of love the prince of Portugal?"

The stranger then turned to other subjects of discourse; yet he supported them heavily—rather like an effort than as spontaneous conversation. The hour of rest drew nigh; and it was with apparent pleasure that, soon after, the pilgrim received a summons to follow Cassim, who was directed to conduct him to an apartment near that in which supper had been served, where a mat, covered with soft, dried, aromatic mosses and leaves, had been prepared for his bed. His attendant was to share the sleeping-couch of Cassim, in a chamber in a far more ruinous condition. The Moor led the way. The stranger graciously saluted his entertainers, and followed; and as he answered but briefly all Cassim's attempts to draw him into farther discourse, the herdsman withdrew, and left the holy wanderer to his repose for the night.

CHAPTER IV.

'Tis now the very witching time of night,
When churchyards yawn, and hell itself breathes out
Contagion to this world.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE apartment into which the pilgrim had been conducted to pass the night was perfectly in character with the rest of the building. It was old, vast, and decaying. The high windows (in many parts without the least remains of glass in them) shook, as the wind whistled through their apertures in melancholy cadence. The massy door creaked harshly on its rusty hinges, as every now and then some gust of air rushed upon it; helping to produce those night noises which unconsciously affect the spirits, while the cause of them is not always easily to be accounted for. The bed that was to give repose to the weary stranger, we have already noticed. An old table, a bench, and a stool formed of the cork-tree, supplied the rest of the furniture.

One piece of ancient Moorish magnificence still remained, too remarkable to be here omitted, as it was most probably a vestige of the original decorations of the place. It consisted of a brazen arm and hand as large as life, represented clad in mail, every ring of which was finely worked and finished. The arm projected from a small recess in the wall—the hand held a lamp; some old drapery, so disposed as to appear like the robe of a person to whom it might belong, hung round the arm, and thus concealed its fastening to the wall. There was, to delicate nerves, something frightful in this accompaniment of a sleeping chamber, whose gloom was only in part dispelled by the feeble light of the lamp. To a fanciful imagination it might appear like the hand of an armed man about to pass into the apartment, and who thus held extended a light to survey it with caution before he thrust in his whole body. This idea had struck the pilgrim at the time he cast a passing glance upon the lamp, whilst Cassim was lighting it, ere the Moor retired from the chamber; but his thoughts were too deeply engaged on subjects of vital interest to his feelings, to allow him long to dwell on any outward thing.

The night was beautiful. The moon, clear and serene, from her high seat in heaven, looked down on the sleeping world. A few clouds, white as Alpine snows, now stood fixed and motionless, or, as they caught some wandering breeze, floated gently onward through the soft blue air. The stars, countless and brilliant—those hosts of heaven, stood as it were giving honour and praise to Him who guides their trackless paths. The solemn light of the moon, as it streamed through the windows of the chamber, though of a different nature, was not altogether ill associated with the awe-imposing character of the lamp. All was hushed and still as death.

The pilgrim threw back his hood, and, by doing so, removed the muffler that had concealed a countenance, of which, however its ability to please might be doubted, the commanding character was apparent at the first glance. The pilgrim might be about three or four and thirty years of age. His features were regular and manly; but a dark lowering expression, which seemed habitual, gave him the air of a discontented man. His skin was tanned to a deep brown, probably by exposure to foreign climates; for where those parts of the neck and throat that had been less exposed were occasionally seen, the complexion was of the fairest hue. His dark eye was somewhat sunk in his head; and the forehead had many a wrinkle that told of early cares, and hinted the story of a life marked by many trying vicissitudes, which in their effects outstepped the course of time; so that, though yet young, there was something of the worn character, the shrunk cheek, and the hollow eye of age, in the countenance of the stranger.

He looked up to gaze for a moment on the expanded sky; and though his eyes met nothing but what was clear and beautiful, there was a dark cloud on his own brow that had settled upon it like the augury of a coming storm. For some time afterwards he paced the apartment, his arms crossed, and his head inclined upon his bosom, like a man in deep thought. Now and then he stopped, sighed, and uttered an ejaculation, or a few words, as if he occasionally thought aloud, rather than spoke in regularly connected sentences.

"It must be so," said he; "I am pledged to the accomplishment of my attempt: my own honour, my name, fortune, my very being, rest on this bold enterprise. I am sworn to him; yet if I thought this infamous tale were false—could I but still hope—I might be tempted to—I might pause ere I adventured. But no," he added, as he shook his head and sighed deeply; "why should I trust to hope—a deluder more

faithless than——? I will trust no one more: away, then, all doubts, all scruples; my resolution is fixed as fate."

The pilgrim now prepared to take his rest. He removed from his neck the straw chain, which was a distinguishing mark of a devotee who had visited the shrine of Compostella. A small cross was attached to it. For a moment he held it in his hand, and then cast it on the table, but without any marks of devotion. Neither did he tell his beads, though he wore a large rosary by his side. But this neglect of his religious duties might possibly proceed from the disturbed state of his mind. He unbound the girdle which girt his middle, but did not remove any other part of his dress, save that he took a small and sharp-pointed dagger from beneath his gown, and deposited it near the pillow of his homely couch. He next examined the door of his apartment; and though, from the recent kind conduct of his entertainers, he had not a shadow of suspicion amounting to fear, he nevertheless secured it by an old rusty bolt that creaked and almost screamed on being moved, probably for the first time in the course of a whole century. Such precaution, however, was unnecessary; as it was well known that the Moors, unless they were the very dregs of their race, never used treachery towards the guest who had tasted with them their bread and salt in peace. But though no outward circumstance could account for the extreme caution of the pilgrim, something within his own bosom might do so. Perhaps a dark or disappointed temper might render him habitually suspicious. This, however, is matter of conjecture. He had given such security to his sleeping chamber as it admitted receiving, and he now stretched his limbs on the couch prepared for him by the care of the hospitable Aza. It was soft and aromatic; and many of the dried leaves that helped to compose it, seemed calculated, by their balmy and soporific power, to aid the salutary weariness which produces a profound sleep.

Yet there is no opiate that will effectually calm a troubled mind. The pilgrim slept; but it was only to meet, in the visionary world of dreams, those anxieties that haunted him in more substantial forms by day, yet scarcely with more pain. In sleep—that image of death—the body for a time becomes little more than the clay out of which it was originally formed; but the spirit is incapable, perhaps, of rest, when (like Noah's dove wandering from the ark) it is absent from that world of immortality designed as its final resting-place. The spirit, in sleep, takes her flight in a manner that must for ever baffle

human conjecture; proving that the soul cannot penetrate the mysteries of its own nature. In slumber, how active, how imaginative, is that mind which, whilst waking, may often be classed amongst the sluggish and the dull! It is in sleep that imagination rears with matchless vigour the wand of her creation. She calls up the past, in colours fresh and vivid. She decorates the present with tints that are brilliant as the bow of Iris, or shadows it with supernatural gloom. She unveils futurity, or depicts it in the fantastic forms of her own visions. The dreamer has a world raised for himself alone; sometimes to cheer his misery, and at others to sadden his mirth. It is the dreamless sleep which images death most faithfully, and yet it is that which men most desire in repose.

The slumbers of the pilgrim were harassed and disturbed by a thousand fearful visions connected with his own situation; and his imagination, strongly excited by recent circumstances, connected them also with those images which had occupied his thoughts during the day. He fancied, after many wild and extravagant wanderings in his dream, that he was in the ruined Moorish palace where he had taken shelter for the night. There was, he thought, some mystery attached to the armed hand which held the lamp: he was desirous to penetrate it; but, whenever he attempted to do so, the light vanished from his sight, and he was left in total darkness. At length it spread itself into a broad red flame; the drapery which encompassed the arm fell to the ground; and he then discovered the figure to whom it belonged. It was that of a warrior Moor, whose aspect looked august and commanding; and yet there was something deathlike in the countenance, which made his blood run chill through his veins, as if he gazed upon a newly-risen tenant of the grave. The figure for a while was motionless as monumental marble; then receding from his sight, and slowly raising its arm, pointed to him to follow. He struggled to do so; some invisible hand kept him back. Again he struggled—and suddenly awoke.

The pilgrim started. His soul, though unused to fear, was shaken to its very centre. His hair arose and bristled on his head, as a cold sweat bathed his limbs, and stood in large drops upon his forehead: for who shall describe his agony—what tongue could tell his sensations—when, on awaking from this terrific vision, he beheld, by the cold gleam of moonlight, for the lamp had gone out, which shone through the windows of the apartment, a tall figure, whose look and air, to the amazed fancy of the dreamer awakened, had something in it of a supernatural character?

The figure was that of a man with no covering on his head: he was wrapped in large and loose drapery. The sickly light of the moon, which shot directly on his face, gave even to its darkness the hue of death. For some moments the figure stood riveted to the spot where he had first fixed the pilgrim's gaze. At length he moved, and turning slowly towards the couch, every feature of this midnight intruder was distinctly seen. The pilgrim, as he viewed him, uttered an involuntary exclamation of alarm, and seized his dagger, for he recognised the living phantom to be no other than Hassan the Talba. Yet how changed! how different in aspect! How opposite was the expression of his face at this moment to the countenance of that Hassan, who, but a few hours before, whilst seated at the supper table of Aza, had there discoursed with the gravity and much of the dogged manner so common among such Moors as aspired to the title of philosophers. His head, now bare, shewed his high and arched forehead in all the majesty of its amplitude. His coal-black eye at this instant had a light in it which darted flashes like fire, yet they were such as might be supposed to kindle in the eye of a fiend rather than of a man. His lips were compressed together, and trembled, as if some powerful passion worked within him that could alone be subdued with effort. He advanced towards the couch.

"How is this?—why this intrusion?—wherefore am I disturbed?" cried the pilgrim in a hurried and confused manner, as he endeavoured to collect his scattered thoughts, and recover from his alarm.

The Talba was still silent, but gazed intently upon the stranger.

"In the name of heaven, or of hell, speak your purpose!" said the pilgrim indignantly; "I am an armed man, and you will find me one not to be trifled with."

"That you will find me," replied the Talba, in a voice deep and impressive. "Up, pilgrim! arouse thee! on this hour hangs thy destiny and mine."

"My destiny!" said the pilgrim, with astonishment; "what concern is my destiny to thee? and what tie can exist between thy fate and mine?"

"The surest," answered the Talba; "that which nothing sunders but the grave—our mutual interests, our mutual will. We both have vowed at the same altar; and Hatred, with his ever-burning torch, goes before us, to guide our steps to the fulfilment of our vows."

"You are frantic, old man," said the pilgrim; "I know something of your people, and that fakirs and madmen are held, as we consider our saints, to be inspired of heaven; so that phrensy, with you, is more sanctified than reason: a sure proof that those who worship madmen are themselves but fools. But I am no Moslem, to endure this folly in any man who may choose, or affect, to be mad whenever the moon comes nearer than usual to the earth. Shake off this absurdity, and tell me briefly what you want, and how you came into this chamber; for the bolt in the door, I see, is not withdrawn."

"The wings of Gabriel are my strength in flight, pass where I will," replied the Talba. "I am not mad; I am as perfect in reason as in memory and knowledge. My searching eye can read yonder book of heaven, which is spread before us in ever-shining characters of light: there I read those decrees of fate that are sealed on the forehead of man. This is the hour that unites your destiny and mine, and I am come to prove to you ——"

"My destiny, I have before told you," said the pilgrim interrupting him, "is my own concernment; and what union can exist between a Christain and an Infidel—a follower of Mahomet's accursed law?"

A scowl, like the shadow of a cloud on a dark rock, passed swiftly over the brow of the Talba, as he said, with an expression of contempt, "Thou a Christian! thou call me infidel! thou who believest neither in God invisible, nor in his word revealed by any prophet! I know thee!"

The pilgrim sprung from the couch, and drew his dagger, as he exclaimed, "Darest thou ——?"

"I mind not thy steel," said the Talba calmly; "I have strength in these limbs, which, did I put it forth, would unarm thee in an instant. I could bind up thy powerless hand in my grasp as easily as I would restrain the slender joints of infancy. Put up—put up thy dagger, and listen to me. Look at this!"

He drew from beneath his gown, as he spoke, a scroll of parchment, which he slowly and cautiously unrolled before the wondering eyes of the stranger, who, startled by some expressions that had fallen from Hassan's lips, felt a degree of curiosity mingled with strange suspicions, to know where this would end. The parchment exposed to view was to him as much hieroglyphics as any inscription on papyrus would have been from Memphis or from Thebes. There were signs,

and figures, and letters, upon it; such, however, as none but a learned Moorish astrologer could have possibly understood.

"What is this scrawled parchment to me?" said the pilgrim, as he cast a glance on it. "I am a man who values common sense, and am neither a credulous idiot nor a doting philosopher, that I should credit the dreams of a star-gazing astrologer."

"You credited a dream just now," said the Talba, "when the armed hand with the lamp haunted your midnight visions."

"Ha! how know you that?" exclaimed the pilgrim, as a cold shudder stole over him; for there was something in the Talba's having obtained a knowledge of his dream that appeared supernatural. "Are there spirits of evil, who wait on the wicked, and tell them the secrets of hidden things—of the world invisible—that you should know this? I have heard of such, yet I never believed in them till now."

"No evil spirit but your own disturbed soul, and evil enough it may be, told me this," answered the Talba; "you called aloud in your sleep, and I heard you as I stood about your bed. You spoke of the armed hand. I tell you truth in this, that you may see I would not impose upon your senses by any feigned means; though your ready credulity would give me the power, were I inclined to do so. Now will you believe me?"

"If my belief in your veracity is to extend itself to the roll of parchment you hold in your hand, filled with signs and scrawlings of which I know nothing but their absurdity, and the credulity of mankind, who are too apt to place reliance on them; if, I say, I am to credit these, you will find me as great an unbeliever as you are yourself in the legends of Christian saints."

"Shall I give you proof of my skill?" said the Talba. "Beware how you condemn the learning or the power of him to whom the paths of heaven through the azure wilderness of air are as well known as the roads to a traveller on earth, or the track of the wild ocean is to him who spreads his sails amid the depths of the waters. Shall I tell you things concerning your past life, which, in spite of prejudice, will make you trust me for the future?—shall I tell you on what you meditate?"

"You could not if you would," cried the pilgrim. "The very hairs on my lip have not heard the utterance of my thoughts. They have never found breath."

"Then will I give them a tongue," said the Talba. "You

meditate the ruin of Don Pedro, prince of Portugal; and that too in the spirit of revenge."

"Moor, or fiend!" exclaimed the pilgrim, "by what black, what devilish art, practised in hell, hast thou learned that thought?"

"By no arts that are lawless," said the Talba: "you know not the power of him who holds his midnight counsels with the wide-spread book of heaven, where the God of light and truth has left the impress of his own image. Dost thou believe me?"

"I know not what to believe," said the pilgrim, as he gazed with strained eyes upon the animated features of the Talba, in whose shadowy brow and enkindling glance there was the power to awe, as well as to penetrate, with a single look, the soul of ordinary men.

The pilgrim was not an ordinary man; he was bold and hardy by nature; and though he found it impossible to account for the knowledge which the Talba had displayed, by any means short of those which are supernatural, he met Hassan's searching eye without shrinking, yet determined to act with caution, as he thus replied: "I can scarcely believe the evidence of my own senses, or that I do not still wander in a dream. Am I awake?" Did I lay me down to rest in this chamber? Are these my hands? Is this my pilgrim's gown?"

"It is a pilgrim's gown," said the Talba, "but not thine, for thou art no pilgrim."

"No pilgrim!" exclaimed the stranger with astonishment; "say then, who am I?"

"Thou art Don Diego Lopez Pacheco," replied the Moor; "Portugal gave thee birth, but by adoption thy country is Castile."

"Thou speakest the fatal truth," said Don Diego, for so we may now venture to call him; "I am indeed that most unhappy man."

"Unhappy," said the Talba, "inasmuch as regards thy fortunes; unhappy, as thou servest a tyrant; but yet most happy—since, by doing so, thou hast found the way to serve thy own revenge! I join my hand to thine in this auspicious hour, to help the great work prepared for us by destiny. In this the Moor and the Christian shall be as brothers."

The Talba extended his tawny hand as he spoke. Don Diego stood for a moment as if doubtful how to act; whilst, with a heaving chest—for his very respiration seemed to labour under the contest of inward feelings, and with a countenance pale as that of a dead man, he gazed in silence, and

fixed his eye on Hassan. At length his doubts appeared to give way before his hopes. A resolution as sudden as the power of thought succeeded. He grasped the Talba by the hand, and said in a deep hollow voice, "I seal the compact."

"Your hand trembles, Nazarene," observed the Moor, "and your heart stirs your gown, that covers your breast, with its thick throbbings. Look at my hand; I can feel and resolve as strongly as you do, but not a nerve in my body is shaken." He held up his hand as he spoke, to shew its steadiness.

"How I am known to thee I cannot tell, I care not," said the pilgrim. "Be it by the means of infernal spirits, or those of a better order, it matters not to me; yet by no earthly means couldst thou know me. But there is that power in the truth thou hast spoken; there is that strength of character in thee; that hardy will, to be and to do what common men could neither be nor do,—I may no longer resist thee; our compact is sealed. Thou didst say I was known to thee; one word proved it beyond a doubt. Henceforth we can understand each other's purpose. There needs not to waste speech on it."

"Dissension shall grow where peace sprung up like the young olive and the vine," said the Talba; "brother shall be against brother, and Christian against Christian, in the proud state of kings."

"The throne of Alonso shall tremble," said Diego, "and Don Pedro shall fall."

He spoke in a high tone of peculiar bitterness, and suddenly started as he looked round, for it seemed as if his last words had been repeated by some one in the chamber.

The Talba observed his alarm, and said, "It is but the echo of the old walls. This apartment was once that of the Moorish kings. It was so constructed to echo notes of music in soft responses: sweet was that sound which, in Moorish halls, proclaimed the fall of the bitterest foe of Ismael's sons. Could they be mute at such a sound? Hear my counsel. You come thus shrouded to Cintra to avoid detection. I know well the purpose of your journey, and that you were last in Castile. Till all is ready, you would remain unknown; you seek Don Alvaro Gonsalez. It is well: rest you with him. There will I meet you; and bring such aid to his secret councils, means so potent in furtherance of this enterprise, that it lives not in your mind even to suppose them possible. Will you be ruled by me in this?"

"I will," replied Diego: "yet that you should know it is Don Gonsalez whom I most desire to seek, exceeds all wonder.

Gonsalez knows not that I am yet alive: nay, more, save one who is his friend and mine, though now far distant in Castile, there breathes not the man who knew it was my purpose ever more to return, thus shrouded and concealed, to my native land of Portugal. With that friend, such is his condition, thou couldst never have held intercourse by any means. How, then, could these things be known to thee?"

"It matters not," replied the Talba: "nay, I know thy very thoughts; the counsels of thy heart are not hidden from me; they are friendly to the cause of Don Sanchez, the bastard brother of Alonso, who now meditates a strife that shall shake the firm footing even of the throne. To the bastard and his fortunes am I sworn for life or death."

The pilgrim looked overwhelmed with astonishment; his surprise rendered him even dumb for the moment, as the Talba mentioned some other circumstances of the deepest import, that proved Diego's own designs, dark and secret as they might be, were as well known to the Moor as to himself.

"I must leave you," continued Hassan; "yet beware! Trust not even Gonsalez with what I have spoken to you this night. I have an especial reason for this caution: Gonsalez, though in secret he professes to be ours, is still ostensibly attached to the king. I will prove him to the quick ere I trust to him all our purpose: yet I believe him true; and well do I know that he hopes much, fears much, from me. Fare thee well!"

"Stay," said Diego; "let me but ask, whatever you purpose hereafter against Alonso or Don Pedro, is it known to yonder Moorish boy and his noble mother?"

"No," replied the Talba; "they know nothing of my purposes, though I hope to work good out of them for both. Aza, noble as she is, still is a woman; and Hamet but a boy, a hot and testy boy, who feels warmly and speaks frankly. Those who share in the counsels of a lofty enterprise, who walk through devious paths, whilst danger and death watch their steps, to profit by the first that may be heedless,—they who do this, must have thoughts swift as light to plan, but patience to act, eyes to see, but not to become as mirrors in which all the world may read the reflection of their mind: a tongue for conference must be theirs, yet none for babbling: no, no; Hamet must not be trusted. He may play his part hereafter: when the game is afoot, he may start to hunt it down; till then I hold him in the leash. I neither trust the widow of Alcanzor, nor the young sharif her son; the lion in his lair takes not the parent eagle, nor her winged nursling, for the sharer

of his counsels. All things seek their kindred, and so do I in thee. I would find a spirit who can hate deeply; I know it is in thee. I would join fellowship with one who can give his hatred action; thou art that determined being. Thou art bold of heart and hand; therefore do I choose thee. Thou art held accursed by thy enemies, who are mine also, and therefore do I trust thee. Ere two days are past we will meet again at the house of Alvaro Gonsalez; there will we speak farther of these things; till then, farewell: be wise, be prudent, and Eblis speed thy enterprise."

"Stay, yet stay," said Diego; "something there is I would ask of thee—for surely thou knowest all things—something I would learn ere I resolve—— "

"Not now," replied the Talba: "I have sought you at this hour that our conference might rest unknown. It is past; the compact is sealed between us; the night wanes apace; I must to my books. Look yonder," he continued as he pointed to the heavens, "the morning star already trembles in the east. It bids me be gone. Soon will it make pale the torch of night. This hour, which I must not lose, is one of import, for even now fate holds the balance with a fearful hand. Before this hour be past, I must search out her decree, whether for good or evil: farewell to thee, Don Diego."

"Which way go you?" said Diego. "Yonder lies the door, to the west."

"No, not that way," replied the Talba; "to the east; my path lies to the east; it is that which leads to wisdom."

He placed his hand on his forehead as he spoke, and bowed his head reverently, in token of that superstitious veneration for the east so common with the Moors, and immediately after advanced towards a kind of niche at the lower end of the chamber, in which was a small door that led to a turret above, but so constructed as to escape any casual observation.

"We meet then at the house of Alvaro Gonsalez?" said the Talba as he was about to retire.

"I will not fail you," answered Diego: "thy designs I doubt not, are great and dangerous. Who shall dare execute them?"

"The Moor! the Moor!" exclaimed the Talba, and instantly retreated within the private doorway to the turret, leaving the pretended pilgrim in that confused state of mind which may be compared to the effects of a bewildering dream. He felt as if just awakened; in that alarm between hope and fear, which doubts if what is past be but an idle vision or an augury of truth.

CHAPTER V.

Smooth runs the water where the brook is deep,
And in his simple show he harbours treason.

SHAKSPEARE.

MORNING found the pilgrim an early stirrer. The rising sun had scarcely dispelled the grey of dawn, when he arose from his couch, and prepared to leave the friendly shelter he had sought on the previous night. His attendant, obedient to the orders he had received to be in readiness at an early hour, was already equipped, and awaiting him, with the mules bridled, in the court-yard. Cassim was also on foot, and offered such refreshment as the place could afford to the traveller, ere he continued his journey. This was declined, but accompanied with a request that Cassim would act as guide as far as the extremity of the forest. The Moor consented, and proceeded to unbar the outward gates.

Cassim, whose curiosity was not a little excited by what had passed on the previous evening, now made some attempts to draw the pilgrim into discourse. Finding, however, that he got nothing but short answers, though given with civility, he soon gave over the attempt; and observing that as guide he must go on first, the pilgrim bade him do so with his attendant, and that he would follow leisurely the path they took before him. Cassim, with the varlet, thus being in the van, whilst Don Diego brought up the rear, the Moor asked carelessly if his master had ever journeyed that road before.

"Yes," was the answer; "I have heard him say as much."

"Christian," continued the Moor, "I would that I knew the subject of your master's dreams last night; for, sooth to say, it seems as if some strange fantasies had been the companions of his pillow. At supper he could eat, drink, and speak like other men; morning comes, and he will neither break his fast nor open his lips. I wonder how he spent the night, that he should become so changed a man in the morning?"

"May be," replied the attendant, "he passed the night in prayer and meditation, as pilgrims are wont to do, who measure back their steps from the tomb of St. James of Compostella."

"If it be so," said Cassim, "you Christians differ from us Moors in more things than the colour of your skins. For you must know, companion mine, that those of our religion, who sometimes go on a pilgrimage over sea to Mecca (to kiss the black stone, called the right hand of Allah, which stands in the east corner of the Caaba, looking towards Basra); such pilgrims, I say, are obliged to be very fresh in memory, since they are compelled to look back on their past lives, and repent them of all their sins; for, enlivened and invigorated by drinking of the holy waters of Zemzem, they have their recollection as clear about them as the sun at noon-day. But thy master, friend, seems to come back from his pilgrimage with quite a contrary effect upon his memory."

"Wherefore?" said the follower. "You heard him last night recount many wonders of foreign countries, that prove he has not forgotten the past; nay, that he is a keen observer both of men and things."

"But not of roads and highways, as I take it," said Cassim, at the same time sharply eyeing the follower; "for were it as you say, how should he need my guidance through this forest, to a road so direct as that to Cintra, had he ever trodden it before with his eyes open? His brother pilgrims, last evening, needed no guide on their return from Compostella. Wherefore I take it that either the dreams, or the meditations, of our pilgrim here, have acted on his memory something like a dark night, so as to endanger his losing his way, though on a well-known road."

The follower made no reply; and soon after Cassim, having conducted the traveller as far on the route as he deemed a guide might be necessary, told him to go straight on, and that the town of Cintra would in a few minutes appear before his eyes, so soon as he should have quitted the covert of the forest.

After bidding farewell to the Moor, the pilgrim pursued his course. The return of morning—the gentle breeze which stirred the leaves of the trees as they overarched the road—the glittering drops of dew that lay on every opening flower and tender herb,—all seemed unheeded; nor could the united melody of a thousand warbling throats, as the birds spread their gay plumage and flitted from branch to branch, arouse Diego, even for a moment, from those deep thoughts in which he appeared to be absorbed.

It was with the utmost caution that he entered the outskirts of the town of Cintra; when, bidding his varlet inquire for

the house of Don Alvaro Gonsalez, who speedily found where it stood, he advanced, with no little trepidation, knocked, and gained admittance. The arrival of a pilgrim from Compostella excited no surprise in the household of Don Alvaro; for at the date of our narrative, the members and relatives of the noblest families of Portugal, as well as Spain, and even princes themselves, were in the habit of performing what was deemed so meritorious a duty as that of a visit, in the humble character of a pilgrim, to the shrine of St. James.

Our wanderer was forthwith conducted, as he desired, to the presence of the master of the mansion; when, bowing respectfully, he waited in silence till the attendant who ushered him in should retire. Yet, though he spoke not, he looked stedfastly at Don Gonsalez; and there was that in the countenance of the Portuguese nobleman which struck Diego as being much changed since he last saw him. Gonsalez was remarkable in his appearance, as well as in his character; in the latter, indeed, more remarkable than either worthy or estimable.

Alvaro Gonsalez was one in whose intriguing mind lay a volume of dark thoughts and hidden plans, too dangerous to bear revealing. Quick in observation, though cautious of speech, his eye, restless and penetrating, watched, like the lynx, the slightest expression, the least change, that shadowed or illumined the countenance of him on whom he deemed it worth while to fix his severe scrutiny. The study of the human face, in all its infinite varieties, was to him an art he had pursued, like the fisher who watches the slightest indications on the surface of the waters, to know where to throw his net. Alvaro read mankind, to avail himself of their inclinations, their passions, their frailties, in order to use them at his own pleasure and for his own purposes. He could be eloquent, though cold and bitter sarcasm was more generally the characteristic of his speech, either in public or in private. He had been brave in the field, though cautious and artful in council; was never known to prove a friend to any one, unless some motive of self-interest excited him to do a friendly act; and never did he become an open or declared enemy, till he was certain he could be such with perfect security to himself. In his person, he was large and powerful. Nature had not, in his exterior, belied what was within; for his countenance, though the features were not bad, had in it that repulsive, that haughty expression, more likely to excite distrust, than to win confidence or goodwill.

No sooner had the varlet closed the door, than the stranger asked Don Gonsalez, if, under his present pilgrim's garb, he could recognise an ancient comrade, a countryman, and a friend.

"There is something in that voice familiar to my ear," replied Gonsalez; "but those weeds so shroud the person, I can scarcely say if they cover friend or foe."

"Know me for the former," said the pilgrim, as he threw back his hood.

"Ha!" exclaimed Gonsalez starting from his seat, for he well remembered the countenance now disclosed to him. "What shadow is this? Do mine eyes deceive me, or is that a living substance which stands before my view? Art thou Diego Lopez Pacheco? My ancient friend, indeed!"

"I am," replied the pilgrim, "and still a banished man. The unjust sentence which, six years since, exiled me from my native land, is yet unrepealed. Alvaro Gonsalez, I now stand before you at the peril of my life. Tell but Don Pedro, or the king, that I am here—that Diego lives, and breathes again the air of Portugal,—and my head within twenty-four hours will fall by the axe of the executioner."

"I would as soon betray my own," answered Gonsalez. "Fear not, Don Diego; you are safe. I will afford you shelter, for I know all your peril. Yet I would beseech you frankly to answer this. In whose service are you now, and for what purpose do you come hither, thus to place your life within danger of your enemies?"

"Exiled from Portugal," replied Diego, "I fled to Castile, where I have faithfully served that king, whom most men call the Cruel. My return hither, by the connivance of my royal master, is at the instigation of Don Sanchez, for whose cause I am employed to carry on secret measures in furtherance of it. Now need I tell Gonsalez my purpose in coming hither? There are plans in agitation, schemes ripe for action, that will not suffer one whose wrongs pant for redress like mine to slumber at such a time as this. Gonsalez, thy part in these things is not unknown to me. These letters," he drew forth a packet as he spoke, "will inform thee farther of my errand, and my full purpose shall be disclosed hereafter."

"Welcome, most welcome," said Gonsalez. "If there be a man on earth whom I would most desire should join our party at this moment, it is thyself. Don Sanchez will rejoice when he shall learn of thy arrival to support his cause. This packet from Pedro of Castile no doubt refers to it."

"It does," answered Diego: "there are those in Castile who wish well to Don Sanchez, and that he may prosper in the bold attempt he meditates."

"And how goes the war in Castile?" inquired Gonsalez.

"The king is sorely pressed by his brother Henry," replied Diego, "who, aided by the valiant Du Guesclin, has driven him from the throne, and now endeavours to maintain his usurpation by force of arms. Should Don Sanchez prevail in Portugal, Peter the Cruel hopes to gain his assistance to recover the possession of his kingdom. It is reported, at least so have I learned as I journeyed hither, that Peter the Cruel has been trafficking with the Moors to reseat him in his throne; nay it is given out that, if they will join him to do this, he has offered to turn Moslem, in requital of their good deed."

Gonsalez laughed. "Peter the Cruel," said he, "I doubt not, would turn Moslem, Fireworshipper, or Jew, rather than ultimately lose his crown. Well, be it so; I trust he will still wear it. Believe me, Diego, there are those at the court of Portugal, who, though they be not banished men like thyself, nevertheless so hate the tyranny of Alonso, and of his son Don Pedro, that they would as gladly embroil this kingdom to throw off the yoke, as the men of Castile, for less cause in my mind, have done to shake off their ruler. But not now will I speak of these things: thy own safety shall be my first concern: for the present, thou shalt find shelter beneath my roof. You stand exposed to much danger—a banished man; death would indeed follow this return to Portugal, should you become known before you can defy all enemies. Your safety lies in joining those whose fortunes, like your own, must rise with the times."

Don Gonsalez knew well how desirable it was that Diego should be numbered with those desperate men who, leagued against the state, were anxious by any means to create civil dissensions in the country, that they might pave the way for the execution of their own plans. He rejoiced, therefore, to secure his ancient friend as a partisan of that secret faction he was so desirous to augment. Long and earnestly did they debate of these matters, and many a scheme of dark intrigue did Alvaro now unfold. These we pass in silence, as hereafter we shall have occasion to speak of them by their effects.

Diego listened with interest, and at length inquired of Gonsalez, "What had been the conduct of Don Pedro, the heir of Alonso, that so many of the Portuguese nobility should desire to league against him, and, if possible, prevent his succession,

in favour of Don Sanchez, who was only the bastard brother of the present king?"

"The causes of disgust are many," answered Gonsalez; "they are not confined to Don Pedro alone. His father Alonso is hated by our party as much as the son. The clergy too are dissatisfied; for Alonso no more spares a priest than he would a layman, and makes your monk live soberly and observe the laws; a thing not to be forgiven by three-fourths of those drones. But the chief cause of offence is the unbridled insolence with which such Castilian nobles as were driven from their country to seek shelter in ours, now lord it over us who are native born; whilst the very lands that many of us had won by hard blows from the Moors are now given to maintain these foreigners, and chiefly the envied family of De Castro."

"The family of De Castro," said Diego, "were once powerful in Castile, till old Don Manuel was banished thence, as was I from Portugal; yet from how different a cause!"

"And that same Manuel De Castro," said Gonsalez, "is now appointed Governor of Algarva, by the influence of Don Pedro with the king. I solicited the post; it was denied me; and after my long service too! But no matter; my sword, that once helped to gain Algarva from its Moorish ruler, will find a way to carve out my revenge. A Portuguese nobleman is now nothing. Your Castilian is lord of the ascendant; and that by the influence of a pair of bright eyes! Ines De Castro is the star that now guides the prince."

"Ines De Castro," said Diego, "was once the fairest, the sweetest flower that blossomed in Castile; and she seemed as innocent as she was fair,—but women are born to deceive, or to betray."

"And if report speaks truth," continued Gonsalez, "she has done both. There is much of mystery in this affair: but you shall hear all; then judge if we, the ancient nobility of Portugal, have not just cause to vow the destruction of this haughty woman, and of her usurping family."

"She accompanied her father," said Diego, "when he took shelter here, after flying from Castile to save his life."

"She did," replied Gonsalez; "and at that time Constantia, the wife of Don Pedro, was alive. The princess, young and amiable, was pleased with the exiled Ines; loaded her with favours; entertained for her an affection rarely seen in woman towards woman; recommended her father and brothers to the protection of Don Pedro; and so began the infant fortunes of

those Castilians, which, now matured, out-top ours of native growth, that wither beneath their shadow."

"And was Don Manuel De Castro as readily taken into favour by the prince, as his daughter had been by the princess?" inquired Diego.

"He was," answered Gonsalez: "wealth and honours were heaped upon him, as the prelude to that high post he has since gained. The unbounded affection of Constantia was returned by the youthful Ines with devoted attachment: if it were sincere I know not, but this I know, that even then murmurs arose at the growing influence of foreigners in the court; they were silenced by the princess, who would hear nothing to disparage her Castilian favourite."

"But as I have heard," said the pilgrim, who appeared desirous to conceal that he knew anything more of the De Castro family than from public report—"as I have heard, the princess died in the flower of her age, and left an infant son."

"She did," answered Gonsalez. "On her death-bed she called her husband to her side (such is the tale the prince himself spread abroad), and earnestly begged of him that her beloved Ines should be suffered to remain with her child, and bestow on him those maternal cares so necessary for infancy, when death should have closed her eyes. Don Pedro promised compliance, and in a few hours after she expired in the arms of her friend."

"And the prince, no doubt," said Diego, "pleaded the last injunctions of the princess, for continuing in favour the Lady Ines, who, on the same score, accepted it."

"Ay," replied Gonsalez; "and if it were no more, all might have ended well. But there are those who will tell you, that, from the very first, the conduct of Ines de Castro had an artful and a calculating motive; that, under pretext of devoted friendship and gratitude to the princess, she laid snares for the heart of the prince. It has been averred by many who were about Constantia, that she perceived this growing attachment in her husband for her friend; that it preyed on her mind, and hastened her death."

"Such reports may be the suggestions of malice," said Diego: "you told me but now, there were those who murmured at the favour in which Ines was held in the lifetime of the princess. You said she silenced them; but envy, though silenced, is not extinguished. It burns like hidden fire, and bursts forth the moment it can find a vent. No longer awed by Constantia, malice alone might have given birth to these whispers of calumny and detraction."

"It may be so," said Gonsalez: "of the motives which governed the conduct of the Lady Ines before the death of the princess I know nothing, unless they may be inferred from her subsequent actions, and if so, I should judge them unfavourably; since it now too plainly appears that this haughty woman had practised on the infatuated regard of Don Pedro to satisfy her unbounded ambition, to raise herself and her family to such power as none, even native born in Portugal, have ever yet attained. Had the influence of Ines died with the princess it had been well; but soon it became manifest that the prince was subdued by her. The charge of the child of Constantia, thus entrusted to her, threw the father constantly in her way, till, under pretext of giving a suitable habitation to the governess of the young prince, Don Pedro built for Ines a palace, such as none but love could have raised for its idol."

"Yet it might have been in honour of the boy," said Diego, "as second heir to the crown."

"Oh, content you," said Gonsalez; "the boy was soon removed from her care by order of the queen-mother. But the bird is still kept within the nest, though the young one be flown. This, however, refers to circumstances, of which I shall speak anon: let me go on with the tale in due course. The care bestowed by Ines on the child was held by many to be no more than a cloak for intrigue with the father. The affliction, say they, which she manifested on the death of the princess enhanced her in the opinion and regard of Don Pedro. Indeed, so artfully did she affect this, that he considered her a model of tenderness and virtue; so that none but Ines could assuage the grief he felt for his deceased wife, and soon were his tears of sorrow changed to those of passion."

"Much of this," said Diego, who appeared willing to extenuate to Alvaro the conduct of Ines—"much of this must be matter of conjecture. The actions of the prince, and of Donna Ines, may be in part known; but who shall with certainty attempt to penetrate their motives?"

"Those who have an interest in doing so," replied Gonsalez. "Trust me, men are Argus-eyed when they scrutinise the conduct of princes. The lowly shrub may lift its head unnoticed; the lofty pine cannot but meet the eye in almost every direction."

"Another circumstance, too, gave colour to suspicion," continued Gonsalez. "It was about this period that Don

Pedro procured for her father the commandery of Algarva. I solicited, but was denied the office. There are those who will tell you it became the price of his daughter's honour."

"It is impossible," said Diego. "Don Manuel De Castro could never be so base, never so far forget the honour of a Castilian gentleman, to become the pander to his child."

"You speak warmly, Diego," observed Gonsalez. "I have heard you say that in early life, years before your banishment, you had been much in Castile; have you, then, any interest in Don Manuel, that you should thus defend him?"

"No interest," answered Diego, "but such as every man must feel, who would not see the most sacred ties of nature thus debased. I cannot think a father, and a Castilian, could thus buy greatness with infamy."

"Many have said the same," continued Gonsalez; "and Don Manuel, some, moreover, say, was appointed commander of Algarva, that, by removing him from his daughter's side, the prince might find the way to her favour without parental scruples of honour to interrupt him. All eyes have been turned on Don Pedro and the Lady Ines. Some have watched them from hatred, others from curiosity—many from envy; but most with a desire to revenge on her the affronts put on the Portuguese at large, by the favour showered on Castilians. The ladies of the court also have not been silent; yet, whilst most vehement in their censures, might we not suspect they envied her who could make a prince thus stoop, like a trained falcon, to her lure."

"And what says Don Pedro to these censures?—have they never reached his ears?" inquired Diego.

"I know not," answered Gonsalez; "for I have forborne his presence since he denied me the commandery of Algarva. The prince treated the Lady Ines with so much public distinction, such profound respect, that his sister, the Infanta Mary, was the first to take alarm at it, to conceive the possibility, that, blinded by passion and governed by the arts of this woman, her brother might so far forget what was due to his high birth as to marry her."

"To marry her!" exclaimed Diego.

"Ay, to marry her," repeated Gonsalez. "The Princess Mary lost not a moment in communicating her suspicions to the king, well knowing that he would frustrate such a plan if it existed, as Alonso had declared his intention that his son should form some second marriage advantageous to the state."

"And what did Alonso on hearing these suspicions of the Infanta?" said Diego.

"What did he!" continued Gonsalez: "act with his accustomed arts of deep laid policy. He knew well the character of his son, that open opposition to his purpose would but strengthen it, and may be hasten its completion. The king, therefore, appeared to treat Donna Ines with all outward marks of regard, and, under pretext of conferring a high honour, named her as sponsor to the young prince, Don Ferdinand, the son of Constantia: thus placing an eternal barrier between her and Don Pedro; for, as all men know, in the church of Rome the office of sponsor creates a religious alliance, which disables the godmother from ever becoming the wife of the father to the child for whom she has vowed in baptism."

"The scheme was subtle," observed Diego; "it was such as none but Alonso would have dared suggest."

"It was evidently designed as a bar to the marriage, if Don Pedro ever meditated marriage," said Gonsalez; "since, soon after this event, the Princess Mary and the Queen-mother procured the removal of the child from the care of Donna Ines. He is now grown a noble boy, but seldom is he allowed to visit her. Yet the Castilian influence is in nothing shaken. If a suit is to be advanced at court, a De Castro must undertake it; if a place is vacant, a De Castro fills it, or sells it; whilst the court and city swarm with exiled Castilians: men of all fortunes, who, driven from their own country by the civil broils that rend it, seek shelter in Portugal; and as drones in a hive devour the stores of the industrious bee, even so do these Castilians batten on us, whilst we toil to feed the hungry mouths of foreign beggars."

"It is strange," said Diego, "that, through the influence of Don Pedro, Alonso should have allowed foreigners to gain so much power in this country. He was wont to be jealous of all Castilians."

"Alonso is inflexible—obstinate in the preconceptions of his own mind," said Gonsalez; "yet there are points in which he is easily managed by Don Pedro. It is now to Don Pedro that the oppressed, the beggared, the fugitive Castilians look for support, assured that the influence of the Lady Ines will be exerted in their favour; whilst, as the sum of all the honours heaped on old Don Manuel, he has been sent, even by the king himself, on a secret embassy, to Arragon. This is a fact passing all wonder. For what purpose this last insult should have been added to so many already cast on the nobility of Portugal remains to be discovered; but dearly will

Alonso repent having chosen a Castilian, the father of his son's mistress, for his ambassador."

Some other causes of discontent were stated by Gonsalez. These we pass in silence, having given at large that which will be found hereafter intimately connected with the subject of our narrative. We now, therefore, shall merely add, that Diego remained concealed in the house of his friend, who, ere two days elapsed, confided to him the entire plan of an enterprise, yet in embryo, that none but a dark and intriguing mind could suggest, and none but a daring spirit would execute.

CHAPTER VI.

——— He is come to ope
The purple testament of bleeding war.

SHAKSPEARE.

ALONSO, who has more than once been mentioned in these pages, was one of the most remarkable kings that distinguished themselves during the chivalrous and romantic period of the fourteenth century. And though many of those events we have undertaken to relate were, in a great measure, brought about by the personal character rather than by the regal authority of this prince, yet it becomes necessary we should here say a few words respecting him in both particulars, for the better elucidation of our narrative.

The uncommon prowess he had displayed at the great battle of Celdano against the Moors, where a host consisting of many thousands of that unhappy race were totally defeated, obtained for him the surname of the Brave. He was a king, great in spirit, and fortunate in war; and although bitter and even bloody quarrels had subsisted between him and the late monarch of Castile (Alfonso, father of Peter the Cruel), yet, nevertheless, when that kingdom was attacked by the Moors, Alonso of Portugal had sufficient magnanimity to bury his private resentments in oblivion, in order to render the assistance of his powerful arm against the common enemy—an infidel people, considered by the church alike accursed of God and man. Of the darker shades of his mind we shall have occasion to speak more at large hereafter, but our present purpose demands we should state that he was a great politician, in the worst sense of the word, since he never scrupled to sacrifice principles to policy, whenever he thought by so doing he could promote the designs he had at heart. In his temper he was rash, sudden, and impetuous; consequently he committed many acts that were unworthy a christian and a prince. But though prone to rash and violent deeds, he was not blind to those faults in himself which prompted them; so that he quickly saw his error, and generally was as quickly desirous to repair it. In his administration of justice, he was rigid, but impartial. No rank, no station, were considered

by him as an exemption from the salutary power of the laws. Yet, such is the infirmity of human nature, Alonso, who was so strict in seeing justice done between his subjects at large, was too apt to forget it when his own passions interfered with its administration.

He was neither an oppressive nor an avaricious prince, though he was a rich one; for commerce, husbandry, and industry of all kinds, flourished under his auspices. The revenues of the crown therefore increased with the prosperity of the country. Some deep stains upon his character may be said to have accompanied him almost to the throne; for, more than once, had he rebelled against his father, the good king Denis. To these acts he had been prompted solely by a spirit of jealousy and resentment for injuries that had no foundation but in his own disturbed, mistrustful mind; and by the suggestions of those wicked counsellors by whom he was beset for many years. These disgraceful transactions, however, had taken place during his minority, and he had shewn many strong tokens of remorse before his father's death. And indeed in his own eyes, as well as in those of the monks, he had completely washed out, in the blood of the Moors, these dark defilements of his early and unnatural rebellion.

To sum up this slight sketch of Alonso in a few words, we may say, perhaps with truth, that his subjects at large had all the benefit of his virtues, whilst his own family, and those who were immediately about his person, suffered, and often severely, from his vices. His manners were far from conciliatory. He was seldom warmed but by anger; and the haughty reserve of his character kept his very friends aloof: so that, although he was esteemed a great soldier, he was little beloved, either by the court or by his family. His kingdom, generally speaking, was in a prosperous state; but, at the time we commence our narrative, many internal discords, parties, and factions, shook that strength, ever the result of union, which constitutes the health and vigour of a state, and which, if once shaken, often leads to some violent convulsion, or to its decline and fall.

The council of the palace (where the king took his seat as supreme head, and whose power, even in this council, was arbitrary, if he chose to use it) was composed both of nobles and ecclesiastics, as well as of the princes of the blood. All matters of deep import were here finally debated or arranged; and it was one duty also of this assembly to receive appeals

from the lower courts, or common councils of state. This august body had met in a spacious hall of the ancient palace at Cintra, expecting the presence of Alonso, to hear an appeal which it was understood would be brought forward on a matter of some moment touching a distinguished nobleman in exile.

Amongst the members of the council present was the celebrated Azevedo, who, though once peculiarly obnoxious to Alonso, was now distinguished, honoured, and respected by him. So entirely opposite was he in character to his royal master, that many had predicted his fall immediately on the death of the late king; yet, contrary to all expectation, he was taken into favour by his successor. Azevedo had now been nearly forty years a faithful minister of state. He had honestly, fearlessly served king Denis. When, moreover, Alonso rebelled against his father, he was the only courtier who was hardy enough to seek the prince; and, whilst threatened by him with death as the reward of his boldness, openly and severely reproved him for such unnatural rebellion. On the accession of Alonso, this was the man whom he chose for his most trusted counsellor; and though, from the natural impetuosity of his temper, he often treated harshly the wise counsels of the venerable Azevedo, no rival in power, no jealous enemy, had ever yet been able to shake the high trust he reposed in this good and faithful servant of the late king his father.

In person Azevedo was grave, venerable, and dignified. There was a mild benignity in his aspect that invited confidence; whilst in every feature of his face shone honesty, like that which it so truly resembles, the clear and open day. His wisdom was the fruit of his experience, yet it had none of those prejudices so frequently found to beset even the wisest in old age. Candid and liberal, Azevedo was ever the first to hear with mildness the opinions of others; to view the matter in debate as it would best advantage that country at whose helm he stood as pilot; whilst all personal interests, all private feelings, were forgotten by him in the general good. Though respectful to the king, as his own and the people's lawful governor, yet he neither flattered his vices, nor spared his errors; and, strange to say, Alonso sometimes endured from this old counsellor such sharp reproofs as no other would have been suffered to utter on peril of his head.

Joseph, Count of Amiranti, was also present at the council. This nobleman filled the post of master to the religious and military Order of the Wing. It was first instituted in Portugal

by Alphonso during the twelfth century, in commemoration of his victory over the Moors at Santarem; because, in that decisive battle, he saw a winged arm fighting near him, which he took to be the arm of the good St. Michael doing battle in his cause. The Count of Amiranti was attired in long white robes, with an azure wing richly embroidered on a ground of gold upon his left shoulder. The sword which hung from his magnificent belt was jewelled and sheathed in a red scabbard. Round his neck he wore a gold chain and medallion. Upon the latter was chased the winged arm of St. Michael and a cross. These words were seen around it—The Wing of the Cross. The masters of the Order of St. James and of Christ, the admiral of Portugal, Lansarata Pesania, and many other distinguished nobles, were also present. And here we must particularly notice amongst them Paul, prior of Evora, a rich and proud ecclesiastic, as he will be found to play a somewhat conspicuous part in our drama. He had been frequently engaged in those disputes, both with the late and the present king (respecting certain rights, privileges, and immunities of the church), which had been the cause of the most serious evils to the kingdom; since, more than once, by the influence of the prior with Pope Martin the Fourth, an interdict had been laid on all Portugal till the disputes in question could be adjusted between the clergy and the throne. However, of late, not the king had been humbled but the prior, by the patriarch of Lisbon having decided a cause (which was subsequently confirmed at Rome) in favour of Alonso. This the haughty spirit of Paul could not pardon; and the king, who hated him for his arrogance and pride, the more so, perhaps, because his sacred character protected him from immediate chastisement, took every opportunity of mortifying and taunting him in public; and in private, of cursing the prior with all the bitterness of impotent rage, that longs for an occasion to make itself felt in something more substantial than words.

The prior was submissive in his manners to the king—a thing which those who knew his character considered a worse sign than had he openly resented the insults cast upon him; as, though destitute of high intellectual powers, his cunning was equal to his pride, whilst he had sense enough to turn both to account on any occasion of self-interest. Yet so strange a compound is human character, no casual observer of the prior within the precincts of his own monastery would for a moment have suspected him to be a man capable of intriguing with popes or quarreling with kings. He was a round-made burly

priest, with a skin as dark as a Moor, and a pair of bright twinkling eyes that, over a goblet of wine, would dilate and sparkle in joyous hilarity to honour the god of the grape. At Evora he reigned with undisputed sovereignty. His pride gratified, he was an easy ruler; as an obedient brother never found in him a hard or stern superior, who would deny an absolution, or even a dispensation, when the wine was old, and the cock crew matins before the last bowl was drained.

Out of the convent, however, he was another man. At court he would seldom taste beyond the first cup, and would dispute, wrangle, and beard even the very king himself with unbridled pride and insolence, if the slightest innovation was attempted on the clergy. For church rights and church immunities he would, like Hotspur, "cavil on the ninth part of a hair." And though he dearly loved the joyous indolent life of a prior within his own walls, yet he had sense enough to know that the dignity of the ecclesiastical character would suffer by such indulgence in the face of the world.

He was attired with considerable pomp. His gown and cope were embroidered with gold and pearls. The crucifixion that covered the back was represented in the finest needlework. From a chain of gold and jewels round his neck was suspended a diamond cross; whilst his gloves, where they covered the back of the hand, were also jewelled.

The council sat expecting the arrival of the king, whose unusual delay excited some surprise, and many conjectures as to its cause; for Alonso was wont to say that the life of man sped too swiftly to admit of one moment being lost with impunity. The chamber in which the members were assembled was situated near the king's own apartment in the palace or castle of Cintra. Like most buildings of importance in Portugal, this was of Moorish origin; for, under the caliphs of the West, and before the Moors were driven from Cordova, they ranked the first in arts as well as in arms, throughout the world. Their mosques, palaces, and other public edifices, were of a structure so costly and magnificent, as to astonish the architects of succeeding ages with the grandeur of their design and the splendour of their execution.

At length the impatient counsellors were relieved from their suspense. A trumpet sounded: the door of the council flew open; and ere ushers, chamberlains, body squires, and pages, could arrange themselves into any order to receive majesty with that state and decorum, frequently not the least imposing accompaniment of royalty, Alsonso of Portugal made his way

hastily through them all, putting every one to flight or into motion, whilst he passed on, regardless alike of those who shrunk back, or of others who saluted him. Anger was in his looks; his short but deep breathing shewed impatience more, perhaps, than speed, as with long strides he made his way to the council-board.

Alonso, in his person, belied not the idea which the mind involuntarily forms of a man who had won his name by the strength and valour of his arm. His limbs were large and robust. He had thews and sinews as hard as the greaves and mail with which they were protected in battle. In stature taller than ordinary men, his bulk would have been unseemly but for his unusual height. His forehead was broad and high, with hair of raven blackness, thick, and tufted, which fell in curls on each side his face, and united with a short beard that bristled in glossy brightness. Though Alonso was more than fifty years old, there was not a grey hair about his head or face. His eye was hazel, brilliant, and large in the pupil. Whenever he spoke, how painful soever might be the subject to the person whom he addressed, he looked him directly in the face; for Alonso had none of that delicacy intuitive to minds of a better order than his own, which shuns to meet the eye of the object for whose feelings of shame, of innocence, or guilt, it feels a generous sympathy. Alonso could look a man down unmoved; and few dared meet his eye, especially in moments of displeasure. The features that composed the face of this extraordinary man were on a large scale, like his body, yet were they handsome; and the deep scar left by the cut of a Moorish scimitar, which was seen across his forehead, agreed well with a certain military air that distinguished the warrior king.

His dress was plain even to homeliness; for he came to the council in such haste, that he had not stayed to put off his hunting suit, which indeed was his usual attire; hunting and hawking being his favourite pursuits both in war and peace. A leathern jerkin and belt, with a short mantle of forest-green cloth, formed this simple dress. He wore a light cap and plume; and a single jewel of immense value, which fastened the band, alone shewed the wearer to be above the ordinary rank. A poniard was in his girdle, and a short hunting-spear he still carried in his hand. Two noble English hounds, or alaunts, such as were used to chase the wild boar and the wolf, followed close by his side. These were so large and strong in limb, that they looked as if able to contend with the

lion in his lair. They had been presented to him by an English baron who visited the court of Alonso in his way to the Holy Land. Brian and Harefoot, emboldened by the presence of their royal master, bounded on before him to the council table, unheeding the interference of an usher who attempted to exclude such four-footed intruders from so august an assembly.

The king was evidently in high displeasure, as with thick and hurried accents he thus addressed the council, fixing his eye, which darted keen and fierce glances on the aged Azevedo —"So, here is goodly work! Close the doors of the chamber, and let all but the members of this council depart on the instant."

He was obeyed; when throwing himself into the chair of state before the table, he thus continued—"This is the result of your counsels, Azevedo: we may not enjoy our very pastime but we are called from it by intelligence of treason!"

"Treason!" echoed several of the members with astonishment.

"Surely, sire," said Azevedo, "this must be some device of your Grace's enemies to disturb your peace. There is not a kingdom of the West more secure in its obedience to a rightful prince than that of Portugal to you."

"It is false, old man, false as thy counsels," cried the king with warmth. "See, lords! I am accoutred for the chase: I was this morning on my way to the forest, when these letters from our governor of Codeceyra were put into my hands. Their import is full of danger, and shews the fallacy of your plans. Look, Azevedo! peruse these papers, and then judge to what your counsels of mercy, which we, in weakness rather than wisdom, adopted, have given birth."

He threw the letter to Azevedo as he spoke, and whilst the aged counsellor was engaged in the perusal, Alonso thus vehemently continued to give vent to his passion with that rapid utterance so common to him in his moody fits: "By St. Michael of the Wing, we are bearded with impunity, and that in our very court, where our word can lay twenty thousand lances in rest ere the sun rise again. The Bastard, lords, our bastard brother, the blood of old king Denis, is up in arms against us!"

A murmur of surprise ran through the assembly. "What! Don Sanchez?" said the master of the Wing: "I am astonished at what I hear! When I lately returned from Syria, I learned your Grace's brother was held in displeasure at court.

I knew no more, and from respect to my sovereign I forbore to inquire into the cause."

"Learn it then, from me," replied the king. "This Don Sanchez, our elder, but our bastard brother, was the favoured son of our late father. Indeed, so much was he a favourite, that to the dead king's blinded love for this lawless issue of his royal house do I owe the origin of all the sins of my youth —now repented, and absolved by the holy church. Denis the Liberal, the father of his country, as he was named for his princely virtues, purposed to apply to the pontiff of Rome to legitimate this favoured son, to make him instead of me the successor to his crown."

"Pardon me, Sire," said Azevedo, "if I am bold enough to gainsay the assertion. Truth, respect to the memory of your great father, my beloved master, will not let me hear in silence a measure of such injustice to your Grace attributed to him. King Denis never designed to make the bastard Don Sanchez heir to the crown of Portugal."

"Ha!" exclaimed Alonso, as he struck the table in the intemperance of his mood, "darest thou brave me with this bold denial?—darest thou make thy prince a liar in the eyes of all his council?"

"I dare defend the memory of a dead prince," said Azevedo firmly, "though a living one would send me to seek him in another world for my boldness. I dare speak truth, and that is well known to Alonso the Brave."

"See, lords!" cried the king, his passion rather increased than diminished by the calm bearing of Azevedo, as his cheek became flushed, and his eye dilated with anger—"see, if taking advantage of his years and his labours in our service, which protect him, he does not beard us like our rebel brother? But we may not endure this. If Azevedo, in his old age, have license to babble, and like infancy, for its very helplessness need not fear chastisement, he should at least be as little heeded."

"And if I," said the cunning prior of Evora, "as a member of this council, may say as much, without being suspected of any motive but that of zeal for the honour and respect due to the great Alonso, I would counsel that when old age babbles impertinence to the crowned head of Portugal, it were time to give it a lower place than that of secretary at this table."

"But not by your suggestion, dark prior of Evora," said the king, who, exceedingly jealous of the advice of others, and capricious even in fits of passion, now turned his anger on the prior.

"What!" he continued, "you would dictate to us, and in this assembly! You would have us displace our secretary; ay, cast out yonder honest man to make room for a churchman, who might rule our council with bell, book, and candle, as Becket did England; or threaten an interdict, if we make laws and see them executed on priests as well as laymen. By the soul of old king Denis, who loved no priest so much as wholesome law, we will not be led, as a hound in a leash, by any monk, were it even his Holiness himself. Come hither, Azevedo; if we reprove thee ourself for thy over blunt speech, we do it in no malice. Thou art like these very dogs that lie at our feet—noble in thy nature, faithful in thy service; but like them too, thou art rough and over-bold to encroach on the favour of thy master."

It seemed as if Brian understood this allusion to himself and his companion; and in order to give a practical illustration of the simile, he jumped up, resting his two fore-paws on the knee of the king, and thrusting forward his shaggy head, began to lick the hands of his master.

"Down, Brian, down!" said the king, "thy boldness, like Azevedo's, is ill timed. Down! I say," and he shook off the noble hound as he spoke. The dog chagrined by this repulse, hanging his tail and ears, slunk under the council table, there to hide himself and his mortification together.

"If," said Azevedo, who now rose to take advantage of a favourable change in the mood of the king, "if I have done service to your grace, I would implore you to suffer me to speak of your unhappy brother. Few are the days that in the course of nature must remain to me on earth. Suffer me then, sire, to end them in as true service as that with which I began them to your majesty's father. Grant me permission, with that noble-mindedness you once extended to me, to speak freely and honestly to my king."

Alonso seemed touched by the candour that displayed itself both in the words and conduct of Azevedo. "I have not forgot," said he, "the past. Well do I remember that to you I owe the greatest benefit that can be conferred on a prince; for you taught me to know what belonged to the duties of my station. Hear, lords," continued Alonso, who was often as vehement in repairing an error as in committing it, "and you, proud priest of Évora, hearken to a lesson worthy to be learned even by a churchman—how to give honest counsel. The king shall tell his own folly and the wisdom of Azevedo. When we succeeded to the throne of our father Denis, whom in our

youth we had grievously offended—like a young and lusty ranger of the woods, we left the business of our state to the council, and followed hawk and hound in the forests of Cintra, without thought of other matters. Once, as we entered the council, after a month's absence, we thought, by St. Julian! of bucks and herons, boars and wolves, more than of our subjects or the state; till mistaking our counsellors for grooms and falconers, we held them in debate on the progress of our sports. Was it not so, Azevedo? Thou wilt not gainsay me now?"

Azevedo bowed respectfully, said nothing, but held up the letter the king had given him to read, as if to remind Alonso how widely he was wandering from the business on which at first he had entered with so much warmth. He seemed to understand the silent hint of his aged secretary; for he said —"We will speak of that matter anon; our story of thy honesty will not detain us long; and we see that the prior of Evora so loves to hear of thy praise, that we would not he should lose one word that shall honour thee. Azevedo, thou didst reprove us for talking of hawk and hound, when the grievances of our people called loudly for redress. Thou didst threaten me with saying, that they would find a ruler for themselves if I forgot to be such. I drew my poniard at thy words—I would have struck thee; but thou didst bare thy breast, and bade me search in thy heart for the truth I doubted in thee. Thy greatness made me great. I did embrace thee as my faithful servant; and with those words, 'He cannot long have subjects who will not be a king,' took my place at this very board as became a sovereign, as head of the council of Portugal. This was thy work, my honest Azevedo. Now will we to business."

"Your grace would speak of the affair at Codeceyra," said the master of the Wing.

"Ay, of the Bastard, lords," cried Alonso. "He has fled to Codeceyra; taken possession of the town; claimed it as his, in right of a grant bestowed on him by our late father, and bade our governor of the castle acknowledge him as lord. Failing to do this, Don Sanchez holds him a prisoner. Such is the daring, such the rebellious spirit of this man, which, like his evil birth, is ever lawless and base. Had we not been overruled by your counsels of false mercy, Sanchez had bit the dust; he had not been spared to raise the standard of rebellion in the very heart of our kingdom. Though, Azevedo, you meant honestly, yet but for your counsels my hand had

rid our royal tree from this rotten, this spurious branch. Thy grey hairs made me listen to thy counsels. Would that, in this instance, they had possessed the wisdom as well as the authority of age! How will you answer it?"

"With truth, as a just man should answer it," replied Azevedo: "I deny the charge. It pains me to be thus bold with your grace, but you have publicly accused me, and I am called on, therefore, as publicly to vindicate my honour. You, sire, have caused this daring outrage in your brother: but for your severity the Bastard had never acted thus."

"What, again!" exclaimed Alonso. "Beware, Azevedo; do not tempt our patience too far. Think ye because the lion sleeps that he will therefore be plucked by the beard without awaking? I can be a severe king; and that thou knowest."

"And I can be a fearless counsellor," said Azevedo; "and that the king has not forgotten. Suffer me to stand in this presence as the advocate of your absent, your erring brother; and the man, it may be, who extenuates his fault, shall find a way to make it change into a virtue."

"Hast thou studied in the schools of the Moors?" said the king. "Dost thou deal in the arts of Arabia? Wilt thou undertake to find out nature's greatest secret, to turn what is base into gold? If thou canst make the Bastard a loyal subject and true brother, thy power were godlike. Speak, however; we will hear thee."

"Don Sanchez," said Azevedo, "is of a noble nature, though somewhat rash and hasty in temper."

"Why, ay," cried Alonso; "in that the Bastard proves his claim to kindred with our house. Our father was hot, and as hasty in action as the caged lion that has slipt his chain. And, sooth to say, the blood of old king Denis has not cooled in its passage into our own veins."

"Your grace mistrusted your brother," continued Azevedo, "when you came to the throne, and ——"

"Had I not cause?" exclaimed Alonso, interrupting him. "Sinner that I am, hath he not been the origin of all the early errors of my life? It is no secret, lords; all the world knows the quarrels of Alonso with his father, and that they often led to blood. This Sanchez was the cause."

"Not of your grace's youthful errors," said Azevedo, "unless suspicion can justify the assertion. You thought Don Sanchez aimed at the succession, and that the late king, my revered master, sanctioned his hopes."

"I think so still," cried Alonso; "and this new act of

violence on the part of the Bastard is not likely to change my opinion."

"This act, sire, I grieve to say it, is but the consequence of your grace's severity to your brother. On your accession, before even time could be given to make trial of his faith or loyalty, you proclaimed him traitor! seized his great estate, and, as the motive to a deed so violent, caused it to be spread abroad that Don Sanchez incurred justly these severities for having been the means of your grace's unhappy differences with your father. I foresaw what would follow, and I then presumed to tell you, what I now repeat, that to proclaim your brother a traitor to his king was the way to make him such. He might have been won by favour."

"Did we not shew him mercy?" said the king, as his dark brow frowned on the council; for no one present dared to contradict what the aged secretary had so boldly averred. "Did we not spare his life? He has now read us a lesson not easily to be forgotten, that there is no way to deal with a viper but to crush it when it lies in your path, or it will turn and sting you on the first occasion. What says our admiral?—what counsel will he give for the manner in which it would be just to deal with this rebel?"

"My counsel, sire," replied the admiral of Portugal, as he bowed respectfully to the king, "would be to try generous measures with Don Sanchez. I would offer him free pardon, if he forthwith returned to his obedience."

"And mine," said the prior of Evora, "would be, that the royal brothers should submit their cause of dispute to the arbitration of the church. Let the patriarch, the abbots, bishops and chief ecclesiastics of this realm judge righteous judgment between the king and Don Sanchez in these claims for township and lands. For it may be there is some wrong, in which the church should exercise her authority. Thus, for instance, if king Denis gave this city of Codeceyra to the Bastard in fulfilment of any vow, or by any oath made on any relic of the saints, or before the altar; in such case king Alonso can in nowise claim or alienate the same on any pretext, without the sanction of the church. To decide in all such matters is a privilege that not the poorest monk, who wears cowl or gown, would yield to any king, however great in arms."

"We will have no priests meddle in our matters," said the king. "Think ye, if the herons quarreled amongst themselves they would call in the kites to settle the difference? No, prior of Evora, we will have no swoop of thine, or of thy brothers,

to find occasion to carry off church lands in the fray. We have seized on the town and lordship of Codeceyra in right of the crown, to which it is parcel. This is no matter to be settled save by the secular powers."

"The church, sire, is appointed as God's deputy on earth," said the prior, "to rule the hearts of kings, and to reprove injustice even in the highest place. When Ahab seized the vineyard of Naboth, it was Elijah, a prophet of God, who denounced judgment on the act."

With a dark scowl did the angry Alonso receive this haughty reply of the troublesome prior. The insinuation it conveyed was too marked to be misunderstood; and he exclaimed in rage, "We will not endure this insolence. Thank thy cope and shaven crown, proud priest, that protects thee from our instant indignation. What means this insolence? We are no Ahab to take away our brother's just inheritance, had it been just, on the witness of any son of Belial; and thou art no prophet, as Elijah was, that the Lord of heaven should call thee to reprove us! We will take better counsel than thine in this matter. What says Azevedo?"

"Sire," replied the aged minister, "when your grace first came to the throne of your father, there was an excellent law, enacted solely by the suggestions of your own wisdom—a law which had its foundation in divine mercy, making no man to be the judge of his own wrong, lest passion and not justice should deal forth the measure of retribution. This great act of your grace was the bulwark of personal security, since it prohibited private men from revenging their own injuries, and compelled them to have recourse to the law, as to that impartial Judge, who says, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay.' I would, therefore, in the present instance, implore your grace to recall that severe decree issued against your brother, as it was contrary to this law, and made yourself the witness, the judge, and the avenger."

"The law was made for the benefit of our people," said the king, "to prevent private revenge and secret murder; but are we, therefore—we a crowned prince—to hold the sceptre in our hand as an empty pageant, having the ensign, but not the power of authority?—Shall we not be a king in act as well as name?"

"God forbid it should be other, my royal master," replied Azevedo; "but the first great attribute of kingly rule is justice—the second, mercy. The first, like the sword of a warrior, awes mankind with its naked strength; but mercy, even as

the sheath, hides the blade when it becomes too terrible for sight. You have enacted, sire, a wholesome law that tempers justice with mercy; teach your people, then, to respect it, by giving them the example of observing it in your own person. Recall the degree of forfeiture passed against your brother, and I will pledge life itself, that, on this royal act of clemency, he returns to his allegiance. Summon him before his peers. Let the knights of St. James assemble in judgment upon him. Let them hear your grace's accusations of disloyalty against Don Sanchez in the time of the late king Denis; and if they are proved, he will have judgment in the course of law; but do not you thus pass and execute a sentence without hearing his defence—without giving him the opportunity to vindicate his honour: judge him not unheard!"

"He has been heard," said the king. "Was not his past life trial sufficient? Did not every act speak? Was he not ever the cause of those unhappy broils that subsisted between our father and ourself? and did not the old king make him chief minister of state at the very hour we were up in arms to remove this dangerous and unnatural brother from our path? He grasped at power, in order to secure partisans that might hereafter support him in his daring aim at the succession."

"And surely your grace must remember," replied Azevedo, "that Don Sanchez, in order to satisfy your doubts, to restore peace to his father's mind and to the country, nobly and freely resigned his office."

"True," said the king; "but art thou, Azevedo, so young and green in the ways of this world, that thou couldst not read such an artifice? Trust me, it was too shallow to deceive even the most willing believers in the honesty of Don Sanchez; none were deceived by it, save his doating father. He had made free with the public purse, till it was nearly bankrupt, and then, forsooth, he resigned his office! We will hear no more in his defence. Thou, Azevedo, hast said thy mind; we have heard thee patiently. Now hear our resolution, and seek not to alter it, for it is not to be changed. We are not to be turned, like the vane, with every breath that blows. Our brother, after a thousand injurious acts, has at length broke out in actual rebellion against our authority, claimed and seized upon our city of Codeceyra; for ours it is, since we will it to be ours. For this he shall be taught submission. Hark thee, Azevedo; we give thee our orders, that a herald be instantly despatched, with these terms, to the Bastard: That he forthwith dismiss his followers, resign all

his pretended rights, abandon the city of which he has taken possession, set at liberty our governor, and that he come unarmed, bareheaded, shoeless, with a halter round his traitorous throat; that he kneel at our feet, confess his crime, and ask our forgiveness. Let him do this, and may be we will then talk of mercy, like Azevedo."

"Don Sanchez will never yield to terms so full of ignominy," replied the venerable counsellor. "I beseech you, sire, think again. Kindness may subdue him. Insult can but spread the flame of rebellion, which, fanned by your wrath, will become a consuming fire."

"Why, then, our master of the Wing shall quench it," said Alonso. "Hear you, my lord count of Amiranti; receive our commands. Summon your knights, your men-at-arms; hasten to surprise the Bastard in Codeceyra: we will give further orders that you shall have support from the bands of St. James and St. Eustatius, and, ere this moon wanes, bring us the bastard rebel on his knees before our throne; or send us his head upon thy lance, and it shall be to thee as a banneret of glory —a guide to thy fortunes, to honour in the state. See you to this without delay."

"I would beseech you, sire, to pause," said Azevedo, "to hear ——"

"I will hear nothing," cried the king, as he struck his hand upon the table in the vehemence of passion; "by St. Michael, though he were our brother legitimate in blood, had he been nurtured with us at the same breast, twin-born from the womb, rocked in one cradle, fed from the same board, the companion of our infancy and youth, yet would we not spare him for this daring contempt of our authority, our lawful rule. And shall he, as bastard in loyalty as in birth, shall he hope to escape? No; his life is forfeit; it shall be paid. We will hear no more. Master of the Wing, you will this day summon your followers for Codeceyra, and thither march without delay."

The master of the Wing bowed, and spoke aside to Azevedo.

"What would the counsel now bring before us?" inquired the king. "These are no times to slumber, when treason wakes throughout the land. How now, who comes hither?"

The door of the chamber opened, and an officer in attendance entered. "May it please your grace," he said, "a messenger from the ambassador to Arragon waits without."

"Let him advance and speak his mission," replied the king. "We would gladly learn news from Arragon."

"Don Manuel de Castro, my liege," said the attendant, "hath sent him forward to announce his immediate return from the embassy. Don Manuel journeys on in breathless speed: this very night he looks to be with your grace, and craves a private audience."

"Ha!" exclaimed the king, "What may that import? It shall be granted: we will instantly admit him. When say you that he comes? To night! Then ——. Break up the council; yet stay. This night will we meet again. I trust the intelligence our ambassador brings from Arragon is such as we shall rejoice to lay before your wisdom for your assent. Till the hour we meet again, farewell, lords. Master of the Wing, look to your charge."

The king instantly retired, and thus suddenly broke up a council, in which an event, fraught with the most serious consequences to the kingdom at large, was hastily determined upon by the voice of one man, the king, who in this day's debate had exhibited some of those traits of character which rendered him so great a mixture of good and evil; of what was generous in sentiment, yet passionate and vindictive in conduct, that even the admirers of Alonso were somewhat puzzled to decide whether a great prince or a great tyrant would be the title to which he might lay the fairest claim. Perhaps he had pretensions to both; for his virtues were bright and many, had they not been sullied by the vices of a jealous, stern, and revengeful temper.

CHAPTER VII.

> Is there no pity sitting in the clouds,
> That sees into the bottom of my grief?
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

INES DE CASTRO, whose name has been so frequently mentioned in these pages, and who was the envy and admiration of the court of Portugal, lived near Cintra, in a residence so delightfully situated, so costly in its structure, that it might have served for the palace of a princess.

The environs of her dwelling were of the most beautiful and romantic character, well adapted to afford shelter from the extreme heat of the climate. A stately grove of pines led into the gardens, where clumps of orange, lemon, and almond trees, with the luxuriant laurel, the myrtle, and gum cystus, spread around perfumes of the finest odour. The vine also twisted its graceful tendrils about many an alcove. Parterres of brilliant flowers were seen to circle a fountain of white marble that threw its streams of sparkling waters high into the air, giving to it that delicious coolness so desired in a country where the sun diffuses its rays without a cloud to intercept their ardour. Statues of the finest sculpture stood around, like the mute guardians of the fountain, whilst from a neighbouring grove the wildest melody met the ear, as it was poured forth by various birds of rare song, some at liberty, and others confined within the wiry prison of an aviary.

The grove consisted principally of acacias, vivid in their foliage and graceful in their forms; many a drooping birch, with a few elms and evergreen oaks, might there also be found. The whole scene was at once sequestered and voluptuous. There were the deepest shadows which a contemplative mind could desire; whilst the senses became enchanted by the softness of the air and the perfume of flowers and aromatic plants. The soul, indeed, gradually sunk, as it were, into indolent repose, lulled by the warbling of birds, the cool plashings of the silver fountain, and the murmurs of a stream that wandered through the gardens amid masses of the living rock.

A saloon, that commanded a view of the gardens and the country beyond, terminated by the mountainous heights of Cintra, stood facing this fountain. It was the favourite apartment of the beautiful Ines de Castro, and such as love, we may suppose, would raise for the bower of beauty. The saloon partook of that Moorish character, both of architecture and ornament, which, in Portugal as well as Spain, had become general, even with the Christians; originating from the magnificent examples of art to be found in the city of Cordova, which, though conquered by the arms of the Cross at the beginning of the thirteenth century, had for more than five hundred years been the seat of the caliphs of the West. The columns which supported the saloon were of jasper—they ran round the interior; whilst an open gallery, like a cloister, that faced the garden, was also supported by pillars of the same material. The internal walls were inlaid with marble, and decorated by arabesque ornaments, painted and gilt with the utmost delicacy of pencilling. The pavement was formed of porcelain of the finest quality; and towards the upper end of the room were spread the richest carpets of Persia. By a contrivance of long pipes concealed from sight, a small fountain, also in this chamber, played into a marble basin surrounded by the choicest plants. It was a copy, though on a smaller scale, of the celebrated fountain of the lions at the Alhambra of Granada.

The ceiling, exquisitely painted by an Italian artist, represented the loves of Cupid and Psyche. A piece of luxury of the most refined description, and peculiar to the Moors, might also be seen in this apartment: it was a small slab of white marble, pierced with holes, through which the most delicious perfumes were exhaled from frankincense and other odoriferous gums that were kept constantly burning beneath. A large mirror of Venetian manufacture, and of so costly a price as only to be purchased by princes, hung in a frame of silver, and reflected the magnificence of the saloon. Vases for fruits and flowers, also of chased silver, sconces to bear lights, of the same rich material, and carved seats of ebony inlaid with ivory, stood around, together with every minor piece of furniture of corresponding value.

One noble work of art that hung on the walls of the apartment was of inestimable worth; namely, the portrait of Ines de Castro, executed by a Moorish artist, the celebrated Zohair, who, at the early age of twenty-five, was both an accomplished painter and poet. He was said to have died of a fever,

brought on by mental anxiety, in consequence of having heard that his native town in Spain had surrendered to the Christians. He was also said to have directed, before his death, that his poems should be burnt, that they might not fall into the hands of his enemies.

The portrait, true to nature, had, perhaps, but one fault. It arose from the Moor (who, like all his people considered a fair skin rather a defect than a beauty) having given too deep a colour to the complexion. Ines de Castro, the original of this valuable picture, was of a sylph-like figure, so exquisitely proportioned, so delicate in every limb and feature, that she seemed as if unfit for the common trials, or even the trivial ills, incidental to humanity. She looked like a flower which hangs on so slender a stem, that the first rude breath of wind would snap it from its feeble support, and lay its head prostrate on the lap of earth. Her complexion was so fair that every blue vein might be seen as it wandered over her neck and forehead. Her hazel eye was enshrined beneath the superb arch of an eyebrow which, dark and full, gave to the head an air of dignity that might otherwise have been wanting; since the eye itself was more calculated to express tenderness and affection, than to kindle with lofty or energetic feelings. Her cheek, if it had a fault, was too pale. It was almost as fair and transparent as her neck. This imperfection, however, in personal beauty, did but assist in displaying the yet greater beauty of a sensitive mind; for, on the least emotion, a light blush, as delicate as the first roseate tint of morning on a fleecy cloud, would mantle in her cheek, and even spread itself over her neck and bosom. The nicest critic in female loveliness must have pronounced the mouth faultless. Her lips, soft, full, and crimson, would smile with sweetness, or part to give utterance to a voice in whose lowest accents there was melody.

Her hair, of light brown, hung in rich profusion about her neck. Its tresses were bound by a fillet of orient pearls; and though she wore around her arms bracelets of the same, the eye in viewing them, neither heeded their value nor their beauty, whilst it contemplated with wonder the exquisite whiteness and proportions of the limbs they encircled. Her tunic was confined by a cote-hardie of light blue velvet, fastened down the front with clasps of diamonds. A veil of silver tissue, and a mantle of crimson silk, completed her attire. Such was Ines de Castro; and feeble is our attempt to portray one whose beauty has been extolled by historians,

celebrated by poets, made the subject of painters, and the fame of it rendered immortal by the misfortunes to which it gave birth.

Yet young, lovely, rich, and possessing an influence which made her an object of envy even with the highest in blood and the proudest in place, the melancholy expression of her countenance, at the time we introduce her to the reader, was singularly in contrast to the apparent gaiety and happiness in which she lived. Ines, in company with her most favoured attendant, Ximena, reclined on a low couch in the saloon. The latter held a lute in her hand, as if she had been recently playing for the amusement of her mistress, who was occupied in embroidering a banner—a common pastime with ladies in the ages of chivalry. Ximena, though a Moor, and a captive, was nobly born. Her disposition was good; and her mistress, attached to her by the gratitude she displayed, treated her with the utmost confidence; even friendship subsisted between them, notwithstanding the difference of their condition.

The attendant watched the countenance of her lady, whose slender fingers continued to ply the needle, though mechanically, for she seemed as if scarcely conscious of what she did. Her eyes were constantly downcast, her looks dejected, her cheek more than usually pale, with an air of anxiety and doubt, which sometimes induced her to put down her work, whilst she listened, as if expecting some one to approach the chamber from without.

All these things convinced the observant Ximena that an unusul cause of trouble had cast a cloud over the mind of her mistress. Anxious to dispel it, she once more touched the lute, and sung, with simplicity, but sweetness, a little Moorish sung, which called up to her own mind in the most feeling manner a remembrance of her people. And on laying down the instrument at the conclusion of her song, she sighed deeply.

"Ximena," said Ines, as she kindly addressed her attendant, "that sigh, my girl, was wafted towards home."

"No, lady," replied Xiemena, "my home is with you. You are kind to me, you love me, and have heaped favours on me; why should I think of any other home?"

"Why?" said Ines, "because nature will be heard in spite of all our efforts to silence her. O Ximena! there is that about old feelings and recollections which never forsakes us. In our bright fortunes we give an involuntary sigh to the

remembrance of those days, gone for ever, when in our tranquil obscurity we enjoyed happiness, though we knew not that we did so. But I have lived long enough in the world, Ximena, to know that happiness is neither found in the tumult of mirth, nor in the splendour of fortune."

"You are sad to-day, dear lady," answered Ximena, "and I know it; for I have often remarked, that when you are so you are apt to talk about happiness, whilst those who laugh and sing all day long never seem to think about it, though they enjoy it. You are sad, Donna Ines."

"I have cause to be so," said Ines de Castro. "Ximena, my father returns this day from Arragon. He has long been absent on a secret embassy; but I have not seen him since he was appointed governor of Algarva. My father returns this day."

"Oh, that I could say so of mine, lady!" replied her attendant; "but he died in Algarva with the noble Alcanzor. We shall meet no more in this world, nor in the next, if father Ambrose spoke truth when he preached the everlasting condemnation of all unbelievers."

"Yet thou, Ximena, art a Christian," said Ines, "and I will hope for thy sake, though the priest Ambrose would chide me for saying so, that the unbelieving father may be spared for the sake of the believing child. Did thy father love thee? Was he tender to thee, Ximena?"

"He was a warrior, lady, and could be, like the lion, terrible in battle; but to me, and to my mother, he was gentle as the dove which hovers near the nest to guard his mate and young ones from harm. I love the very name of father: there is music and endearment in the sound. Why then did you speak of yours in accents of fear?"

Ines sighed as she said, "Alas! Ximena, you know not my father, nor the cause which makes me conceal from him what I have dared to do. How shall I meet his eye? I long to see him, yet I dread his return. Surely as he gives me his blessing I shall wither beneath his look. You know all, should you betray me——"

"Betray you!" echoed Ximena: "Oh, fear me not, you know not the heart of your poor Ximena; you have taught me to be a Christian. To be faithful was a part of our Moslem creed. And think you, that my new and better faith will teach me less than that did? Lady, in the story of Christianity there was no part that shocked me so much as where Judas betrayed a kind Master. My lips are sealed till you bid me speak."

"I know it, I believe it," said Ines. "Ximena, you are aware of the fatal secret which preys on my mind, but you know not the cause of my greatest sorrow. It gives so bitter a pang to this heart, that I have never spoken it. I would hide it, if I could, even from my own thoughts—never have I yet revealed it to you."

"Yet griefs, wise men say," replied the attendant, "are, like burdens, lightened by being shared. I speak not this to pry into the hidden sorrows of my dear mistress. I would wish to know those cares, that I might help to remove them, or give them my tears if I could not. I have not forgot the time when I came to you as a slave, but with you I felt not the rigours of bondage. You cherished me—taught me to know the true God and his Son. How can I ever repay you for thus bestowing on me liberty of mind as well as body?"

"Kind, grateful, affectionate Ximena," said Ines, "I will trust you. A heart like yours merits all my confidence. But you will better understand my cause of alarm and my sorrow, if I tell you the character of my father. By birth he is a Castilian."

"And noble I am sure he must be," said Ximena; "for no man, save of noble blood, could have been the father of Donna Ines."

"He is, indeed, noble, both by birth and nature," replied Ines. "You know he is now——"

"Favoured by the prince of Portugal, who influenced the king to make him governor of Algarva, he is powerful as well as great," said Ximena.

"Ay," replied Ines, "but he is still a Castilian; and not all the fair broad lands that make up a foreign country is half so dear in his sight as one lone field of his native land. My father, it is true, lives in Portugal, but his soul is not there. Like a man in a dream, whose body slumbers whilst his thoughts are transported to a distant shore, even so are my father's thoughts for ever bent on his country. He has no resting-place for his hopes; no home for his heart; not even would he find a sepulchre for his head, save in Castile. But, hark! Ximena! what noise was that? Sure it is he! It is my father. Whilst I yet speak of him, he comes: or, can it be?—but no, not at this hour. Go, Ximena, go, see who comes. I will endeavour to be myself to meet him."

Ximena obeyed her mistress, yet, ere she could return to satisfy her, a cavalier, who stood not on any ceremony for admission, entered the apartment. Ines looked up, and instantly

recognised her father, notwithstanding the close and large mantle which was wrapped about him, so as almost to conceal his person.

The large limbs, the face that became a helmet better than a courtly hood; those features calculated to awe rather than to please, to enforce obedience more than to win confidence and affection; all shewed the cavalier to be no other than Don Manuel de Castro; that patriot, who had preferred his country to every motive of self-interest; who had suffered, bled, and been exiled, in the cause of freedom, in defence of the oppressed. A Castilian by birth, an enthusiast by nature,—though driven into banishment, he still carried the worshipped image of his country in his heart, at whose shrine every sacrifice was to be made. Don Manuel de Castro had seen adversity in her severest front. He had fled from Castile in consequence of the conduct of Peter the Cruel, who seized his lands, and even sought his life, in revenge for his having espoused the cause of his kinswoman, Joanna de Castro, whom that Nero of modern times had married and abandoned; and happy was it for her that she escaped the fate of Blanch of Bourbon, his first wife, whom Peter imprisoned and poisoned.

Such was the ruling passion of the venerable Manuel de Castro. For the rest, he had all that high sense of honour which constitutes the very life-blood of the old Castilian noble. Yet, in him, it was more of a patriotic than personal feeling; so that, however prosperous he might be in his exile, whilst he considered the honour of his country tarnished, he deemed his own crest but as drooping in the dust.

In his manners he was often harsh: there was at times even an asperity about him that gave pain to his dearest friends. This defect of temper, however, was more the consequence of long solicitude and anxiety, than of nature. And though so many months had elapsed since he had seen his daughter, he now met her in evident disorder; a dark cloud hung about his brow, which not even the light of her eye, as sparkling with tears of affection it was fixed on his face, could dissipate. Yet the feelings of the father were powerful in his heart; for, as he strained Ines in his embrace, he exclaimed, with a tenderness of manner unusual to one so stern, "My daughter! my dear Ines! I have wished for this hour. It is come;—am I welcome?"

"Welcome, my father?" said Ines; "oh, can you doubt it! many and worthy have been the thoughts that I have entertained for you."

"But hast thou entertained the like for thyself, Ines?" continued Don Manuel, as he bent on her a look of anxious inquiry. "What truth is there in the things I hear of thee? Even at the court of Arragon it is noised abroad that the daughter of De Castro is more to the prince of Portugal than suits with her own fame or her father's honour. I would not decide rashly. I will hear calmly and judge fairly. Thy head is cast down, there is a blush on thy cheek. Look up, Ines! darest thou look up, and say thou art worthy to call thyself the child of old Manuel De Castro?"

Ines seemed deeply affected, and her agitation increased at every word that was spoken by her father. She did not answer.

"Nay, then, I see how it is," he cried; "thou art worthless. Oh, Ines! I would rather see thee dead than see thee shamed; yet I cannot think; speak but the word, say thou art guiltless. Do not break the heart of thy father—already does it bleed with sorrow;—say thou art innocent, and he lives!"

Ines, in a transport of feeling, rushed to her father's arms, clasped her hands, and vehemently exclaimed, "As there is a God in heaven who sees the truth of all hearts, so does he know that I am innocent! These foul suspicions, these whispers of envy and calumny, these may disturb my peace, but they cannot alarm my conscience."

Don Manuel seemed in some degree relieved by this emphatic declaration of his daughter; for there was in it that fervour of expression which truth imparts to those who are inspired by the love of virtue. "Holy Virgin be praised!" he said: "I no longer doubt thee. Thine, Ines, is not the brow of shame; nor was so fair an index as this face made to bear the character of dishonour. Whence is it, then, that these reports have arisen? I know the sacred alliance which subsists between Don Pedro and yourself, that of your being sponsor to his son. I know it sanctions his devoted respect, his attentions to you. These things make it in some degree a duty that he should be to you as a faithful friend—a brother. In consequence of this holy alliance, he gave to you the very palace, in which I find you, as a residence. Yet I hear the boy is removed from your care, whilst his father has made no change in his devotion to your service."

"The youthful Ferdinand is of sufficient age," replied Ines, "to be removed to the charge of a governor. The prince of Portugal, his father, is wise and virtuous, incapable of dishonour, and ——"

"And loves thee," said Don Manuel, as, with a penetrating look, he fixed his eye on his daughter to read her inmost soul. "I see it is so. I will not, therefore, question thee on that point: I will not tempt thee to sully thy pure mind with even a thought of dissembling. But, O Ines! beware: I know the sacred tie, which, through the medium of his boy, binds thee to Don Pedro. Beware, lest it becomes abused. The prince, both by the laws of the church and of his station, can never be more to thee than he now is. There lies a gulf between you. To pass it would be infamy. It is a boundary guarded by the interdict of heaven itself. Whilst you respect it, you are safe. Attempt to climb the height on which the prince soars so far above you, and ruin, misery, and death must follow. Did all else fail, I would play the Roman father rather than see thee live dishonoured. Remember my admonition, and beware——"

"I shall never forget, sir," said Ines, "what is due to my own honour or to yours. The prince himself, I am convinced, would no longer esteem me could I become base. His heart is full of virtue, and his lips breathe its dictates."

"It may be so," said Don Manuel, "yet princes are not as other men. There is a lustre about their high station which throws a light, though it be a false one, even on their very vices. Beware, my daughter; in one so far above you, there is seduction in his very favour. The wrath of a prince is far less destructive than his affections when they are lawless. Too often are they like poisons, sweet to the lips, but deadly in the draught. So much for this. Now for other matters. Dost thou know I was sent from Algarva to Arragon, as ambassador from Alonso king of Portugal?"

"I have heard as much, sir," replied Ines. "The object of your mission I did not learn. But as I heard you undertook it with more than ordinary anxiety, I conjectured that, whatever the mission might be, it in some way affected your native country of Castile."

"You were right, my child," replied Don Manuel, "it did affect Castile; nay more, the very existence of my country, so long exposed to danger, rests on the ultimate success of this mission to Arragon. Thou knowest that the Count of Transtamare, who has risen in arms against the tyrant, Peter the Cruel, has applied to Alonso of Portugal to become his ally in the enterprise. Alonso, desirous to give effectual aid, sent me as an ambassador to Arragon to propose terms that should induce the sovereign of that country to join him. I

have fulfilled my mission, and now return to Portugal, in the hope to bring all things to a favourable close."

"Yet I hear," said Ines, "that Peter the Cruel has obtained the support of England. What hope therefore has Castile?"

"All hope," replied Don Manuel, "if Portugal, if Arragon, take up arms in her behalf. And that Arragon may do so, now depends on one condition. Should that fail, Castile may be numbered with those countries that lie deluged in blood, and look on misery as on their inheritance; whilst here, there will breathe no soul who will lay these griefs to heart but one old man, whose arm, weakened by age, already trembles as it wields the sword. If this purpose fail in favour of Castile, I shall go down to the grave in sorrow and in shame."

"Alas, sir," said Ines, "you think too deeply on these things. You have suffered every peril in the support of your native land; whilst you could aid her, nothing have you spared to do so. If she must fall, console yourself with thinking it to be the will of heaven; and do, my dearest father, do endeavour to forget these anxious thoughts."

"Forget!" cried Don Manuel;" "as soon could I forget my own soul. No; if the tyrant who now rules Castile falls or lives, I will not forget her. Tyrants have their date of life, they pass away, but our country—never! Have I not cause of grief? Does it not seem as if, at this very time, the wrath of God was poured out on the nations of the earth? It is as if the fourth seal were opened, and that death with the pale horse, followed by hell, had power given to them: for surely the sword, hunger, and misery, have spared no corner of the wide world. Do they not chasten it with their iron scourge? Peter the Cruel reigns in Castile. His subjects have been butchered like herds for the slaughter! Nobles, princes, his own brother, nay, the very wife of his bosom, have helped to make up his account of midnight murder. In Arragon, though the alliance of that country is necessary to us, yet there also reigns a prince who dyes his very robes of royalty in human blood. France has her king a captive. Her own hand has made the grave of her own children; whilst the hand of conquest presses her down to the very earth. In England, there is faction. In Rome, two popes cause fearful divisions. The Guelphs and Gibbelines render Florence a scene of war and fury. In Germany, two emperors contend fiercely as rivals for a crown. Tamerlane has overrun all Asia. The very earth is watered with blood, which falls on its thirsty

surface like rain, that makes it teem with increase from human sacrifices. In Granada, the Moors maintain an empire; and there, and elsewhere, do they continually rise up in arms to molest the Christians. Where then is peace to be found on earth? Where will old Manuel de Castro, who sorrows for these miseries, but most of all for his dear country, where will he find a quiet grave?"

"Do not talk thus, my beloved father," said Ines; "have better thoughts. But now you expressed warm hopes that your mission to the court of Arragon would be attended with success. That country, uniting with Portugal, would finally restore peace and happiness to Castile, by driving from its throne a cruel and bloodthirsty prince."

"I did say as much," replied Don Manuel, "but I fear thy resolution."

Ines looked surprised. "My resolution!" she said, "what have I to do with this?"

"Thou!" exclaimed Don Manuel, "thou art said to influence Don Pedro of Portugal in a manner no one else living dare hope to do. The terms with Arragon cannot go forward without his sanction; and I fear thou wilt not give them thy support with the prince."

"You think hardly of me, sir," said Ines. "Tell me, what are these terms? for, being sanctioned by you, I have warrant for their worthiness; and then prove me, if I love not my native country so as to desire the accomplishment of such terms with Arragon, as may give to Castile the support of two united crowns."

"United crowns they will be," said Don Manuel, "if the terms are carried into effect. They propose the alliance in favour of Castile, to go forward after the union of the royal houses; the infanta of Arragon to become the wife of Don Pedro of Portugal, who shall then make war on his own account, since, by his mother's side, he has some claims on the crown of Castile."

Ines de Castro replied not a word. A deadly paleness overspread her features. Her limbs trembled, and refused her support. She sank on a cushion that was near her. Shocked, and even indignant, at observing this agitation in his daughter, on the mention of the proposed marriage of Don Pedro with the princess of Arragon, Don Manuel seemed to lose, in a moment, those tender feelings which had filled his heart on first meeting her. With a stern air, and in accents that shewed how little he sympathised with her

feelings, he severely upbraided his child for indulging an affection for a prince, alike removed from her by the sacred ties of the church and by his station; for, though he did not doubt the honour of her mind, yet he feared its firmness; and that, unable herself to wed the prince, she would use her influence to prevent his espousing another. As his daughter was godmother to the son of the heir-apparent, an office then held of great consequence and privilege, Don Manuel dared not remove her from the court, else he would not have scrupled to do so on the instant, when he now so evidently saw the danger to which she was exposed by her affection.

Ines appeared to labour under feelings which she endeavoured to conceal, but could not conquer; and, in return to her father's repeated questions, she could only assure him he judged her harshly, unkindly; pleaded her agitation in excuse, and allowed there was something preyed on her spirits, and rendered her unhappy; yet conjured him, as he regarded her life or peace, not to urge her to confess the cause.

Astonished, confounded, yet determined in his purpose, Don Manuel, after repeatedly commanding his daughter to see Don Pedro as little as possible, but if she did see him, to advise the marriage with the Infanta, prepared to take his leave. "I go, Ines," said he; "think upon my words. Think if thou canst bear to lose a father's blessing, to abide a father's curse! I leave, perhaps, in your hands the fate of Castile. Think of that—the fate of thy country! Wouldst thou see her bleed while it was in thy power to save her from destruction? If this marriage goes forward, all will unite for the glorious work of deliverance. Who that has one generous feeling would let his own selfish passions interfere? Dispel this weakness; for I suspect it lurks in thee. Thou canst never wed Don Pedro; —kneel then at his feet, and if thou hast the power with him for which men give thee credit, use it to save thy country."

Don Manuel retired, leaving his daughter in a state of mind that was almost insupportable. The late scene caused her to adopt a resolution which we shall communicate to the reader in the following chapter.

CHAPTER VIII.

Whence this dishonour but from thee, thou false one?
OTWAY.

NEAR the extremity of the gardens, and without the walls of the palace, there stood a small chapel which belonged to a convent of nuns, who were especially favoured by Ines de Castro. Many of them were poor Castilian ladies, the daughters of the exiled and ruined nobility. Such as had chosen the cloister, Ines portioned to become inmates of this sanctuary. The venerable bishop of Guarda also much favoured the convent of St. Mary, and frequently officiated at the mass, or in the confessional.

The chapel stood prettily embowered within a small wood, where there were many winding paths.

It was a beautiful Gothic building. Thither Ines resolved to bend her steps after the late painful interview with her father. She called Ximena to bring her veil, and having equipped herself for the purpose, declared her intention of going alone to the confessional. Ximena knew that it was frequently her custom to do so, as she there met the bishop of Guarda, who was her spiritual director, and the friend of Don Pedro. The faithful Moor, therefore, felt no surprise; and as she saw from her expressive countenance that some deep cause of anxiety lurked within the bosom of her mistress, she forebore all questions: for Ximena never forgot, even in moments of the greatest familiarity, the distance between herself and her lady; a prudent and delicate line of conduct, which it were well if all favourites and humble confidants observed towards their superiors.

As Donna Ines slowly advanced, she observed by the grey light of evening, for that was the time, portions of the building peeping between the trees, whilst the solemn glow of the windows, illumined by the tapers burning at the shrines of the different altars within, were now seen, now lost, and again became visible in all their gorgeous colouring, as the windings of the little path gave them to or hid them from the view. Every step she took seemed holy ground; for beneath every

tree, whose superior claim to distinction rested on the veneration due to age, might be seen some image, some cross, or a sylvan shrine, there placed to remind the traveller that holy thoughts should begirt his path of life, even as did holy things his steps to the house of prayer. An image of our Lady of Seven Sorrows, with each of those particular griefs carved round the base of its pillar, stood not a stone's throw from the chapel, and at the end of one of those cross-paths that penetrated through the wood.

Ines remarked a figure seated on one of the steps which surrounded this pillar. By the twilight she could only distinguish that the person was wrapped in long garments, and looked like a monk; and, as she knew there was in the vicinity a convent of the wandering order of St. Francis, she immediately concluded this to be some brother of that house. On passing, therefore, Ines graciously saluted him with one of those pious modes of address so common to the period—" May the blessing of our Lady of Seven Sorrows be upon you, holy man! May she avert all sorrow from thy soul, or give thee patience to bear it!"

The person to whom this courteous benison was spoken seemed to be aroused from some deep reverie by the sounds of her voice. He started, raised his head from its drooping posture, bowed reverently, but made no answer. Donna Ines passed on; and as she looked back ere she reached the turn of the pathway, perceived that the silent brother had quitted his seat, and was advancing towards the chapel.

It was with feelings of deep devotion that Ines entered the sacred fane.

Already had the evening service commenced. She came at the beginning of the penitential hymn; and the effect it produced was not, perhaps, the less imposing because sounds so full of melody came from unseen lips, as the nuns who chanted were concealed by a black curtain, which hung before a large iron grating. Ines listened with emotion. The deep swell of the organ, as it rolled along its world of sound, and shook the aisles with its vibration; the full and plaintive chorus, now modulated into the richest tones of harmony, or raised to high and thrilling notes, called up every feeling of the soul, softened the energy of passion, and elevated the mind beyond the boundary of earth, to rest its thoughts in heaven.

Some few persons were assembled in the aisles of the chapel; among whom might be seen a wandering monk, and two or three pilgrims. Ines de Castro had taken her seat near a small

lateral altar dedicated to St. Anne. Towards the conclusion of the evening service, at the elevation of the host, the black curtain was suddenly withdrawn, when through the iron grating might be seen, within a low vaulted chamber, the nuns closely veiled on bended knees, singing the praises of the great Redeemer. After a short space the curtain fell and concealed them from sight. Presently voices were again heard, solemn and low, as at a distance. At these sounds all the congregation turned towards the west. The voices gradually grew louder and louder, the organ pealed, as with slow and stately step, issuing from beneath a Gothic portal, came the lady abbess, bearing in her hand a silver cross, and followed by the sisters, who covered, yet not concealed by their thin black veils, advanced parading through the different aisles of the church, singing in full chorus the hymn to the Virgin.

As the procession passed on, Ines remarked that the figure she had before seen in the forest stood leaning again one of the pillars of the transept, and that his eyes were fixed upon herself. There was, perhaps, nothing extraordinary in the circumstance, since many persons, especially strangers, gazed with much curiosity, both in and out of church, on the famed beauty of Ines de Castro. Though this man stood apart, and where a broad shadow, that fell upon him from the superincumbent arches, prevented his person from being distinctly seen, yet Ines could perceive he wore the garb of a pilgrim. So fixedly did he gaze upon her that he seemed unconscious of the presence of every other person; and though the procession, as it passed along the transept where he stood, for a few minutes concealed him from her view, yet, when it had retired into another aisle, Ines still beheld the pilgrim in the same spot, in the same attitude, and with his looks in the same fixed manner bent upon herself.

An involuntary shudder stole over her as she observed this; yet why it should be so she knew not. Possibly the alarmed state of her mind, which made every nerve in her body tremble on the slightest emotion, like the leaves of the aspen by the least breath of air, might be the cause. The service was now concluded; every one hastened to quit the church, and she likewise quitted it to enter the locutory of the convent. There she remained but a brief space, as the bishop of Guarda, whom she sought, was absent. Again she passed through the church. On crossing near the transept, the figure of the pilgrim, standing on the same spot, again met her view. Every other

person had by this time retreated; and with hasty steps she also did the same.

As Ines retired, she could not help fancying this singular being was employed to watch her. In order to shun him, she turned into a different path from that by which she had entered the church. Yet her precaution was vain; for at the very moment she was passing the base of the rock we have lately named, to strike down another way leading to the gardens, the pilgrim stood between her and the very path she was about to follow.

Alarmed by this action, Ines hesitated a moment; but thinking, after all, that the singular conduct of the stranger might arise merely from his necessities, as begging and a pilgrim's gown were so often found in company, she said, as she prepared to open the almonier that hung from her girdle, "Pilgrim! if thou hast crossed my path with the intent to crave alms, yet want resolution to speak thy necessity, it is but a part of my duty, in returning from the shrine of our Lady, to prevent thy asking and thy wants. Take this in charity."

"The charity I would ask of thee, lady," replied the pilgrim, "is to shew pity to thyself."

"To myself!" exclaimed Ines; "what means this strange address? I saw you but now with fixed attention watch me in the church—you have followed me hither—you intercept my path, and now accost me in terms of inexplicable mystery. What may this mean? If there is import in your words, speak it; if not, take my gift and suffer me to pass on."

"You pass not on till you have heard me," replied the pilgrim. "There is import in my words—life or death hangs on them. Thou art the daughter of old Don Manuel de Castro."

"If you know who I am," said Ines, "you should also know that I am not subject to command, far less to be thus interrupted, and forcibly detained by a stranger. If you have aught of real import to communicate, follow me to my house; there it will better suit me to hear you than in this lone spot."

"No," answered the pilgrim: "here I have encountered you, and here will I be heard. Have you prayed this evening, lady, and for pardon of those injuries you have inflicted?"

"Have I prayed?" said Ines, repeating his words with astonishment; "I am but this moment retired from the altars of our holy church. Imperfect as my prayers may be, pilgrim, I mock not God in them—they are sincere: but you are not my confessor, to demand of me so strange a question. Many

are my faults to heaven, but I know not that I have injured a fellow-being."

"But I know it," answered the pilgrim; "and such injury as none save those who feel the like can estimate its extent. Will thy heart tell thee nothing?"

"I am not bound to answer thee if it did," said Ines, in a tone of displeasure. "Thou art a stranger, intrusive, and free of speech: yet, if thy garment speaks thy real character, thou shouldst be holy. You have charged me with I know not what. Be brief—explain this, or let me pass on. I will not brook delay; your words are insolent and bold."

"My words are not bold," replied the pilgrim, "unless they be bold to speak the truth; for, as there is a God above us, I speak but sober verity! I say there lives a being whom you, lady, have deeply injured, and he now stands before you. Have you forgotten the unfortunate Diego?"

"Holy saints and angels!" cried Ines de Castro, "art thou he?" As she spoke her countenance turned pale; her hands, which she pressed together against her brow, shook; and her whole frame, trembling and disordered, expressed alarm mingled with embarrassment.

"I am that injured, that unhappy man," said the pilgrim; "yet neither injuries, nor misery, nor time itself, have conquered my affection. You see before you the same Diego, once betrayed by you, but who now comes willing and resolute to save you from destruction—willing to pardon, to forget past injury, would you but let him do so."

For some time the pilgrim, or rather Don Diego, continued to speak without interruption, for it seemed as if the surprise of the lady Ines held her mute. At length she recovered sufficient resolution to say—Oh, forbear! you know not what you urge. I have not injured you, that is, not wilfully. The engagement between us in my early youth, ere I quitted Castile, was my father's act, not mine; to have kept it, on my part, would have been far greater guilt than to break it. Cease, then, to reproach me. If I have been the involuntary instrument to do you wrong, suffer me to make such reparation as may be in my power. If fortune has dealt hardly by you, I have the means, the will, to do you good."

"Is it thus that you speak to Diego?" he exclaimed in a haughty tone, as his cheek flushed, and his dark eye kindled with offended pride. "Forbear to add insult to injury. You little know the mind of Diego, if you think that he would stoop to take at your hands, though he were groveling in

misery, in the very dust of the earth, aught save a full performance of that solemn contract. Think not that a heart, which for seven long years has loved faithfully in spite of fortune—has loved through the changes and chances of time, of country, of each variety of suffering,—think not that such a heart will deign to receive less than would satisfy its fidelity. It is yourself alone can be my recompense. No wealth, no idle shew of power,—though you could place its sceptre in my hand—would requite me for all the injuries, the sufferings I have sustained for you."

"Alas! then," said Ines, "I have nothing to bestow. My heart can never be yours; our ancient engagement—my father's act, not mine—can never be fulfilled. Here all must end. Leave me; and take my prayers for your peace, since all else you reject, save what I cannot give. You say that I have injured you, because I could not mock God's holiest institution, to offer vows upon his altar which my heart could never ratify. If this is to injure you, grant me pardon. Leave me, and may God guide you!"

"He will guide me," said Diego; "and to save you, most lovely, though obdurate, yet most beloved woman! I cannot see you fall, whilst I have a hand still free to extend it to snatch you from the gulf that lies before your steps. Hear me—I must be brief; all I could reveal I dare not. This is no time, no place, for such a confidence; yet thus much must be told. In this country, in this very court, there exists a faction vowed to your destruction. You are a favoured stranger; an object of envy, of hatred, of jealousy, to the native Portuguese. This you owe to the unbounded influence you have exerted with the prince, with that Don Pedro whose love will be your ruin. I am not one of those who join with the giddy multitude in the voice of censure: I have turned a deaf ear to the slanders of envy, the suggestions of malice. To your purity of heart I have done full justice, and never have I suspected your honour."

"You dare not suspect it," said Ines, colouring as she spoke. "I heed not the whispers of envy. But my affairs are not your concernment. If you mean well, I thank you; but I have friends, and do not need your service."

"Friends!" exclaimed Diego; "ay, Ines, so might the lamb say, when the wolves by night steal round the fold to watch the moment to break in for destruction—such are your friends. But you have one better than they; you have a friend who is yours in evil days, one who will cherish, honour,

and confide in you, through ill report as well as honourable praise; a friend whom none but yourself can make other. Nay, Diego will save you in spite of yourself, and trust to your own sense of the act for his future happiness. Abandon the court, quit the presence of Don Pedro, fly his importunity, sequester yourself from his favour, or he will prove your destruction. Already are you deceived. Fly him, ere you become his prey."

"I will hear no more," said Ines, in a tone of passionate indignation. "Don Pedro is incapable of aught but what is worthy and noble. His honour, like his station, is raised above all others, that he may be the example, or rather model, by which to fashion the gallant knight and virtuous gentleman. I, as well as my father, am guarded by the prince; and no tongue in my presence shall dare censure him unjustly."

"Yet he will destroy you," said Diego; "but it shall not be. Your father, say you! I could whisper to him such things as should make him tremble to know that Don Pedro did but look upon his child. Away with this! hear me; what I have asserted I can prove. I have learned but this hour the arrival of your father from Arragon. Follow me to his presence; and there, in the face of God and man, I will reveal such things as shall force conviction even upon you. I will shew Don Manuel matter dark and perilous. Nay more, by doing so my life will be in his power. Be this my pledge of truth. Let me but save you—model me after your own will. I will be as wax in your hand, so you but give me some impress bearing the characters of hope. I am embarked on a sea full of crossing tides and dangerous billows. They may engulf me, or they may lead me on to safety. Say but the word, give me but the hope that I may save you—that I may think of you in times to come, as I did in my boyish days, and I leave all for you. Deny me, and here we part. Yet our parting shall be like that of body and soul, to meet again at an hour of fearful reckoning. Come with me to Don Manuel; we will seek your father."

As he spoke, Diego attempted to grasp Donna Ines by the hand. She suddenly extricated herself from his hold, and in a loud voice demanded that he would suffer her to pass on. This he totally disregarded; and, again entreating her to accompany him to Don Manuel, that he might make known to her the dangers he had so darkly hinted, he once more forcibly seized her arm, as if to lead her from the spot.

This she resisted, as she exclaimed, "Unhand me, sir, I will

not yield to this unmannered force. I will cry aloud for help; these very woods shall send me a deliverer. It cannot be but some traveller, some passenger, is near at hand, who will aid me. Beware what you do; you may suffer for this boldness; a word of mine would crush you, did I but use the power I have to speak it to your enemy."

"Speak it!" cried Don Diego. "Do so, ungrateful woman. Call on the prince to destroy the man to whom you were once so solemnly betrothed, that all but the last vows had bound you to him. Tell Don Pedro who I am, and what I would do, at the risk of life itself, to preserve you. Say to him, under these pilgrim's weeds there lurks the man banished by your princely order, and for a crime which had its origin in the most faithful love. Do this Ines, if you have the heart to do it; but if not, as you value honour, life, peace on earth or hope of heaven, come with me to your father."

Again he attempted to place his hand upon her arm. She shrieked aloud. The cry brought assistance more speedily than might have been expected; for a slight rustling among the leaves was followed by the sudden appearance of a cavalier, who stepped boldly forward, and in a firm and indignant voice commanded the pilgrim, at the peril of his life, instantly to let go the arm of the lady.

Ines de Castro, in those agitating and confused moments, stole a hasty glance at her deliverer: instantly recognising him, she cried aloud, "It is the Prince!"

Don Pedro, confronting the pilgrim, laid his hand on the hilt of his sword, as he said, "Who are you, that dare thus offer interruption to a noble lady? For what cause?—from what motive? Speak, or you die. Are you a pilgrim, or a robber thus tricked in a holy guise?"

"Thou art the robber," exclaimed Don Diego; "and I, who am the injured man, dare say as much to Don Pedro, though he be prince of Portugal."

"Insolent villain!" said the Prince.

"Cease your invective," replied his opponent. "Have you forgot me?"

"By all the powers of heaven, no!" cried Don Pedro. "Now do I remember thee too well. Thou art Don Diego Lopez Pacheco. This present insolence suits well with thy former presumption. This shall not go unpunished: thou art a banished man."

"Ay," exclaimed Diego, "and was sentenced into banishment for having struck the prince of Portugal with my dagger;

for having drawn his blood in return for a blow—a vile, a dastard blow—such as cowards give to slaves,—bestowed on me by the hand of the heir-apparent to the crown; and that too in a quarrel about some rival attention paid to my betrothed bride, to Donna Ines. It was somewhat unworthy of a prince."

"If you so well remember the cause and the punishment of your offence," said Don Pedro, "you should also remember that the forfeit of your return, uncalled from banishment, is life. Your life, at this moment, is in my power."

"Take it," answered Diego, "it is yours;" and he added, in a tone of marked irony, "it will complete the acts that shall hereafter seem most worthy in the annals of a great prince:—to rob a noble gentleman of his betrothed bride; to spurn, nay, to strike him, when he dared upbraid thee for the crime. Yes, you struck me! I answered it with steel, I drew blood from those princely veins. But not that blood—not seven years of shame and banishment—have washed from my remembrance that indelible mark of my dishonour. Once more am I in thy power; and, at the peril of my life, I bid defiance to thee in thy teeth. I demand compensation to my injured honour; or bid you, if you will, fill up the account of your own unworthy acts by taking my forfeited life. It is yours—the law will give it you: I am unarmed, and have no means of defence."

"It is that which saves you," said Don Pedro. "I wage no combat with an unarmed man, however justly I may be incensed against him. By the laws of Portugal, you were sentenced to death for having wounded, in my person, the heir to the crown. If I struck you in haste, in passion, when provoked by unbridled insolence, in cooler moments I preserved your life; since but that I solicited some mitigation of that sentence, death, and not banishment, had been your portion."

"I cannot thank you for such mercy," said Diego, "You did but procure me length of days, that I might end them in disgrace. To rob me of her who was affianced mine, to aim at me a blow, to chase me from my country in poverty and ruin, are injuries not to be forgiven. I live to be avenged; I tell you this: if you are wise, profit by it now I am in your power, for I will never yield."

"Alas!" said Ines, who spoke for the first time during this sudden and confused scene—"alas! he speaks mere madness. Do not heed him, noble prince. Don Diego thinks himself injured, and I fear too justly, by me. I would entreat you to pardon him. Suffer him to depart unharmed."

"Not by you be such a prayer offered to one who has betrayed us both," said Don Diego. "We were happy till Don Pedro came between us. Our parents in infancy had betrothed our hands. But you were fair and frail, weak, and easily won by the vain glory of a princely wooer. I was the first victim of his power; you are reserved for the last. But, oh, there will come a fatal hour of retribution!"

"I heed not your words," said Don Pedro. "I can allow for the feelings of anger and disappointment, though they rest in the bosom of my enemy. Go, Don Diego, go in safety; I will not betray you. And learn this, that at the very hour you returned hither, uncalled, to heap fresh insults on a prince, he was labouring for your deliverance from banishment. But that this day I was prevented attending the council, I had purposed, with the concurrence of the venerable Azevedo, to appeal to the king's mercy in your behalf. Go in peace. But remember, though I can pardon injuries offered to myself, I will not pardon any repetition of conduct so violent as you this day offered to this lady. She was never thine by her own will. Leave me instantly, or you may find me dangerous."

A bitter expression curled the lip of Diego as, with a feeling even of contempt, he prepared to give some answer to the prince. Don Pedro, however, as if unwilling to receive any further provocation from one whom he was conscious he had been the means of injuring in his tenderest affections, would no longer listen, but, leading the lady Ines from the spot, hastily retreated towards the gardens of her habitation, entered by a postern gate of which he had the key, and secured it after him. Don Diego, as she retreated, stood gazing upon his lost and beloved Ines, till the woods excluded her from his sight. And as he retraced his steps he was in a frame of mind so desperate, to which he had been wrought by strong and contending passions, that then he first resolved on trusting a knowledge of the whole affair to Gonsalez, and on communicating to him a plan which it will hereafter be our task to set before the reader.

CHAPTER IX.

Matter of marriage was the charge he gave me.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE Prince, who so opportunely rescued Donna Ines from the importunity of the impassioned Diego, informed her, as they returned to the house, that not long after she had quitted it, he had there sought her. Ximena told him that her lady was gone to attend the evening service at the little chapel in the wood. Thither had he followed, and was advancing towards it by a sequestered path, when her cry for assistance met his ear. This relation finished, Don Pedro, who saw how much Ines was agitated by what had passed, forbore to increase her distress by any farther allusion to the circumstance, but hastened to support her onward, that on her return home she might have time and rest to recover her spirits from the recent alarm. Don Pedro, though some years had elapsed since the death of his princess Constantia, and though his son Ferdinand was nearly twelve years old, was himself little more than five and thirty; so early in life had he been married from motives of state policy, and so early had death deprived him of his wife. The prince was, in person, like his father Alonso, more than commonly tall. He was esteemed one of the handsomest and most accomplished men of his time. His air was dignified. Regular and handsome in themselves, his features were rendered still more captivating by his eye, which, large, black, and quick, in a moment became lighted up with animation, or softened into the tenderest expression. As a poet would have said, it was an index to his soul. His flowing hair, bound by a fillet of pearls about the head, fell in graceful ringlets over his shoulders. Indeed, his whole person was striking and princely.

He was not only a patron of, but an adept in, many of the arts and sciences. Music had the most powerful effects upon his feelings. It could soothe or elevate his mind in no common degree. He was deemed one of the most elegant poets of his time. So much did he esteem learning, that he not only

cultivated it himself, but, when found in others, it was ever a certain passport to his favour. He loved the chase; and as for his disposition, it was warlike; yet not in the same manner as in his father. Alonso was fond of war for its own sake. It was his native element. A time of peace was to him a time either of restless anxiety, or of langour, and almost torpor. He was heedless, daring, wreckless in battle; whilst Don Pedro, on the contrary, united prudence with courage; and though hitherto he had shewn no taste for war, save on occasions of just necessity, yet when in the field he acquitted himself gallantly, tempering victory with mercy. His manners were affable, grave, and pleasing. His temper, his affections, were in general tranquil. Like most persons, however, of a grave disposition, his feelings were neither to be read nor understood by common men. They lay deep and hidden. There are affections, and amiable ones too, which, like water when the slightest thing touches its surface, give way to the impression, and become agitated by it; yet in a little while they subside again, and are as calm, as tranquil, as if they had received no disturbance. Such was not the character of Don Pedro. His heart might be more justly compared to a rock; not easily to be engraved upon, but when once it receives the impression, it is lasting. Storm or sunshine may visit the surface with darkness or with light, but there is no change in the inscription.

Such was the heart of Don Pedro. He was also liberal and generous; a lover of justice, and a friend to the poor. Yet, as if humanity, even in its brightest state, could not be without spot; in the midst of so many great and shining qualities, nature had planted one, as baneful in itself as injurious to the possessor—pride. Don Pedro, in a word, was the proudest man in Christendom. Such was his character at the time we introduce him to the reader. In what respect it was acted upon by subsequent events will be seen in the following pages.

The prince of Portugal was attired with more of taste than splendour; for it was one feature in his character, that might have its origin in pride, to neglect all magnificence about his person, or in his mode of living, except on rare and public occasions. He wished to owe no distinction, no homage, to adventitious aids; he would be great in himself. He was at all times heir-apparent to the crown of Portugal.

With this pride of heart, no wonder that, in a court where all were magnificent, he rather chose to be distinguished by the plainness of his attire, and a total neglect of external decoration.

On returning to the dwelling of Donna Ines, he conducted her to the door of her apartment, where he was compelled to leave her to give some orders to his attendant. It is probable that she employed the time of his brief absence in endeavouring to compose her feelings. Yet, when he returned, there were traces upon her brow of recent agitation; and as she received, and fondly returned, the embrace with which he strained her to his bosom, tears bedewed her cheeks.

"Nay, fairest and best beloved," said Don Pedro, "dry these tears. Wherefore this distress? Let not the violence of yon frantic intruder trouble thus your peace. I am near you—I am yours in tenderest affection, in the most watchful cares. What then should excite alarm whilst Pedro lives but for you?"

"Alas!" said Donna Ines, "I have a cause of grief, which fain I would make known to you, but yet fear to do it."

"Fear nothing," replied Don Pedro. "If there be aught about your state or person which may be deemed beneath your quality or your desert, say but the word and it shall be rectified. There is not a thing which wealth, from sea or land, can command, but I would exhaust it to gratify your wishes."

"Nay, not so; it is not of such wishes I would speak," said Ines. "Alas! you know me not. It is not outward things that could thus disturb my peace. To your affection I owe my elevation. The height is a proud one, but it is almost too dazzling for my weak sight. If I look down I am giddy, and think how uncertain is my footing, how great would be my fall. Believe me there are moments, when, always excepting thy love, I could sigh for my once obscure fortune—that fortune which had nothing in it to fix the attention, or to create the envy of the world. I have not forgot my early home, where, but for your love, I had flourished, withered, and decayed, unheeded and unknown."

"Not so," said Don Pedro. "Thou, Ines, wert more like some beauteous plant that grows neglected amid the forest wilds of nature; yet so noble in thyself, so worthy the admiration of mankind, that to graft thee on a royal stock would add to its lustre, but could not to thine own excellence. Have I not given thee every proof of a love so pure and devoted that heaven it may be is jealous of too much worship bestowed on his creature, and, therefore, thus troubles my peace? Why then these tears? Never do we meet but they fall to grieve me."

"They do, indeed," said Ines; "yet never had I so much cause for alarm as at this moment. Never, since the hour I first forgot what was due to duty, have I known so much distress: I am beset with unquiet thoughts, with struggling affections, and opposing cares. There is but one way to cure all."

"Speak it!" said Don Pedro.

"I fear to do it," answered Ines; "and yet this is no moment to shrink back, when there lies before me a gulf which threatens ruin."

"Gracious heaven!" exclaimed Don Pedro, "what can this mean? Give thy purpose plain words. What is it you would have me do?"

"Declare our marriage," answered Ines, in a tone of voice and manner that spoke the alarm with which she made the proposal. Don Pedro started at hearing her words. In a moment a lowering look of displeasure seemed to settle on his brow, changing at once his cheerful aspect into gloom, even as the gathering storm shadows the sunny earth ere it bursts upon it.

"You know the cause," he replied in a low voice, and with a gravity that evinced a resolution not easily to be shaken; "you know the cause that forbids it. Our secret marriage was sanctioned by the dispensation I privately obtained from Rome. Surely this marriage ought to be sufficient. Your own scruples were satisfied. You are my wife in the sight of God and your own conscience. Would you have ruin overwhelm us both by so heedless an avowal?"

"Ruin will fall on both, at least on me," said Ines, "unless that avowal is made. Hear me, I beseech you. And if ever hapless woman had claim on the pity, on the affections of man, I have a claim on you. Hear me, and grant my prayer."

"I have granted much, Ines," replied Don Pedro. "To call you mine, think what I have sacrificed, and to what perils I have exposed my own head. My father's wrath—a wrath which, like the whirlwind, sweeps down all before it, and carries death in its course—to this danger have I periled myself for love of thee. I have refused the heirship of a second crown by marriage with a queen, and have thought the palest wreath of summer blossoms that binds thy locks of gold, dearer and richer than her diadem. For thee and thine I have exposed myself to the jealous hatred of an angry faction—nay, more, so jealous is the nation, so fearful of

Castilian influence and power, that I have periled my very right to the succession by a marriage whose sole interest lies but in the heart. Surely, then, I have deserved something at your hands, some forbearance, some regard to my safety. The preference of a prince to an obscure maiden, however lovely, might deserve some grateful token that would prove it was not quite forgotten."

"Is that, think you," said Ines, "the motive that would influence me? Know me better, my husband; know better the heart of Ines—the heart of woman. Think you that her gentler sense of affection would place the idol of her heart even for a moment beside either worldly rank or worldly power? No, prince; to woman's love the least tender thought, the slightest care bestowed on her by him she loves, is of more worth, has a higher claim on her gratitude, than did he gird around her brows the golden circle of an empire. It was the heart of Pedro that won on the soul of Ines de Castro. Boast not then of things like these, though men value them as their greatest sacrifices."

"But if they are all a man can give, surely they may have some weight in the scale of affection," said Don Pedro.

"It may be so," replied Ines. "But I tell you, that woman's love outweighs them all. What are her hopes, what her possessions? Placed by nature in a lower sphere of action than man, her all is her affections. When she gives heart and hand, from that hour she places love, happiness, honour, liberty, all in the power of man. Her very existence is bound up in that of another, who may cherish it or destroy it at his will. Can woman give aught that is dearer if she be the tenant of a cottage? Can she give aught more precious though she be a queen? Learn then to know her heart, and do not rate its sacrifices by the gauds that weigh in the balance of ambition."

Don Pedro, sensibly moved by his wife's tender expressions of her love, clasped her to his bosom.

"How excellent," said he, "are the thoughts of thy mind and the feelings of thy heart! Who would not love thee? Did I need an excuse for that affection which has prompted me to give up all for thy sake, I would say it is less to be found in the charms of thy beauty, matchless though it be, than in the generous feelings of thy soul. You are my wife, my most beloved wife; yet I must not, I dare not be moved by your request, to acknowledge you as such."

"If my words cannot move you," said Ines, "think upon

our children; think of those innocent pledges of our love, and what may be the consequence to them of this concealment of our marriage. Do not, as you are a father and a prince, do not expose the honourable branches of a royal house to be looked upon as a degraded, a base-born issue. Their very existence is now concealed, whilst I—their fond, their anxious mother—I am debarred the natural right of openly watching over their infant years. I dare not visit the place of their concealment, unless it be by stealth. Oh! think of this; and think of my deep shame—that I, who as a matron should hold my place amid the honourable mothers of the land, I dare but steal to them under cover of darkness, like a wretch who would hide her degraded offspring from the eye of the world."

"Forbear, I beseech you to forbear," said Don Pedro.

"Trust me," continued Ines, "they are fair and promising, and in nothing would disgrace their royal lineage by claiming some portion in the blood of my fathers. I can feel this, and though I am of no princely house, my honour is as dear to me as thine."

"Peace, Ines, peace, I beseech you," replied Don Pedro. "Forbear to urge this. I have told you that the day will come when our marriage may with safety be revealed."

"And that day is now at hand," said Ines. "For whether I speak, or whether I forbear, there are circumstances that will compel you to declare it, unless——" She paused, and her voice, tremulous with emotion, seemed to fail her; so much was she overpowered by wounded feelings.

"Unless what?" exclaimed Don Pedro.

"Unless you purpose to disclaim me altogether," continued Ines; "to break the slender, though sacred tie, that binds a prince in marriage to an inferior; to play with holy rites, and annul them by some future dispensation, that may be obtained from Rome, perhaps, with as much ease as that which was procured at the suggestions of impassioned love."

"I have not merited these doubts," said Don Pedro; "you know me incapable of such baseness. Has my affection lost one touch of its ardour, or of its constancy, since it was sanctified by the marriage vow?"

"Then know the truth," cried Ines. "There will be a bold attempt made to break it. My father is returned from Arragon. To me he has revealed the purpose of his embassy. Nay, more, he has urged upon me, and in terms I tremble but to think upon, that—holy saints and angels!—that I, thy

lawful wife, should counsel thee to unite thyself in marriage with the Infanta of that kingdom; so that, on this union taking effect, Arragon and Portugal may unite for the deliverance of Castile, and that thou, having cast down the tyrant, Peter the Cruel, shalt set up thy own claims to fill his throne in right of thy mother's blood. This is my father's counsel; you know if he dare maintain it."

"Not against my will," exclaimed Don Pedro. "Let him be thus bold, let him but venture to lay such a contract at my feet, and I would spurn it from me, bid defiance to Arragon, and chastise the man who should dare but in thought to fetter my will at his pleasure"

"But your father," said Ines, "is privy to this contract. Think you, that he, on any light excuse, will grant you the liberty of free choice, where a kingdom would be lost by such refusal! Hear me; there is but one way for safety. Take thy infants by the hand, lead them to the foot of the throne, confess that, governed by strong affection, thou wert led to marry with Ines de Castro; shew Alonso the innocent fruits of that ill-fated marriage, and beseech him, if he have the pity of a man, if he have the heart of a father, to pardon our offence for the sake of those helpless children. Remind him that his own blood flows in their veins; that Juan is the image of his grandsire. Their innocent looks, as they kneel at his feet, shall plead for mercy. The king will pardon thee, for he is a father!"

"I dare not," said Don Pedro. "Ines, I may no longer hide the truth. You know not Alonso. You think him formed of mould like other men. While the king lives, I must never acknowledge our union. When death shall have closed the gates of the grave on Portugal's proud king, and plucking from his brows the crown, shall place it upon mine, then, but not till then, must I avow thee to be my wife, my queen! Till that hour comes, not the tomb itself can be more silent than must be the secret of our married love."

"Then am I lost indeed!" said Ines. "Yet, surely you are in error. Though a passionate prince, yet, when his mood has given place to reason, Alonso is a just one."

"I dare not trust him," said Don Pedro. "Offences far less than he would deem this to be have been visited with death; witness the fate of the late bishop of Evora. When Alonso rebelled against his father, he did but threaten to proceed against him with the spiritual denunciations of the church. What was the consequence? The prelate's death

followed, and that without space being given even to plead for mercy. Alonso, I tell you, is generous where he thinks his own interest or that of his country may have been the motive to boldness in the conduct of another. But trust me, disobedience in a point so vital to the honour of his blood, so allied to the interests of the crown, as that of my marriage, would be visited with a punishment I could not avert."

"Surely the wife, the children of his son," said Ines, "would not be so hardly dealt with as you seem to fear. Your word would save them."

"My word would not reach his ear, Ines," replied Don Pedro. "Think you that a king, who, for jealousy of a brother, had rebelled against his own father, would spare his son? I should be cast into prison, my unhappy offspring would be banished the land of their birth as base and ignoble, whilst their sorrowing mother would be offered up to death as a sacrifice for what he deemed so deadly a blot on the honour of his house. I must not, I dare not, grant your prayer."

"What must be done then?" said Ines. "May heaven help me, for all earthly aid seems vain."

"I will think upon it," replied Don Pedro. "In the mean time compose these agitated thoughts. Remember my words. Death, ruin to thyself, thy father, and thy kindred (for trust me thou couldst not save them if this thing were known), all hang on the discovery. The destruction of our children, of myself (for I could not survive such misery), would follow. Be cautious, wait in patience; be silent, and all may yet be well. Alonso thinks I love thee, but never would he dream that thou wert wedded to his son."

Ines blushed deeply at the humiliating thought of the shame to which she was exposed by her secret and unadvised marriage with Don Pedro. Distressed in mind, yet seeing no immediate hopes of relief, she dropped a tear in silence as her husband pressed her to his arms; and after many a vain effort to reassure and calm her agitation, he at length was compelled to leave her, that, by the king's command, he might attend his father in council ere he retired to rest.

CHAPTER X.

The lists are oped, the spacious area clear'd,
Thousands on thousands piled are seated round;
Long ere the first loud trumpet's note is heard,
No vacant space for lated wight is found;
Here dons, grandees, but chiefly dames abound.
CHILDE HAROLD.

It was with a mixture of bitter and indignant feelings that Don Diego quitted Ines de Castro to return to his associate in deep-laid schemes of villany—Alvaro Gonsalez, a villain, if possible, more subtle than himself. The hatred of Alvaro towards the Prince and the venerable Manuel de Castro knew no bounds; as, after a vain attempt at rivalship in state policy, it had been hurried on to its utmost excess by the government of Algarva having being denied to this dark politician, and given to Don Manuel.

The hour was midnight. Gonsalez had but that instant returned from the council of Cintra, when he met his friend Diego in his own apartment. A flushed cheek, a kindling eye, a manner agitated and restless, all told Gonsalez the disturbed state of his associate's mind. A short pause ensued. It was broken by the impassioned and disappointed Portuguese, who, in the bitterness of his soul, and in no measured terms, communicated the story of his wrongs, both real and supposed, to that friend who now sheltered his head from the danger of the laws.

The wily Gonsalez listened with attention. He saw in a moment how much this cause of complaint might be made to assist the great purpose he had at heart; namely, to weaken the present frame of government, if, by this or any other means, a division could be brought about between father and son, in the persons of the king and the prince of Portugal. The idea also, that, possibly, Diego's cause of wrong would afford opportunity for a signal vengeance on the whole of the De Castro family, flashed across his mind with the rapidity of lightning; and many dark thoughts instantly suggested themselves to his intriguing spirit.

"Thou hast been foiled in thy attempt to win upon an ob-

durate woman," said Gonsalez to his friend, after listening to his tale. "I see it in thy angry brow, as well as in thy words: but I will teach thee a way to win her, and at the same time to wreak thy vengeance, where it shall be most keenly felt, on thy hated rival, Don Pedro."

"You talk wildly," said Diego. "It is true I have been foiled—what of that? She is but a woman. I will steel my heart, and learn to forget her. She cares not for me."

"Not while you are thus tame in the pursuit," replied Gonsalez. "Know you not women? then will I teach you what they are: insolent in power, vain in beauty, careless of true affection while it is at their command, but unwilling to lose that which they but seem to resist; once gained, tame and docile as the domestic cat, which strays not from the hearth of its master."

"Such may be women of ordinary mould," said Diego, "but such is not Ines de Castro. You must not judge her by the general character of her sex. She is of another nature; though, I grant you, obdurate, and little sensible to the passion of one who would give life itself to save her."

"It is thus," said Gonsalez, "that every true lover makes out his own idol to be one of a higher order than the rest of creation. What wilt thou say to me, if I should point out a way to give thee this woman in spite of all her resistance? Thou art moody, and dost think, because her brow has frowned on thee, that she is no longer an object of thy care. Well, resist love if thou wilt; but, to my mind, revenge has something in it yet more bewitching. Listen to me, and both passions shall be satisfied, whilst our schemes are forwarded to boot."

"You utter mere madness," said Diego; "speak within compass of reason, and I will listen."

"Well then," continued Gonsalez. "I will speak reason. I am but this hour returned from the council, summoned thither by the king; and what think you was the purpose of such a summons?"

"Some sudden resolution against Don Sanchez belike, who lies under the imputation of treason, for having re-seized the town and lands of Codycera, given to him by his late father king Denis, and wrested from him by his tyrannical brother king Alonso."

"There was something of that mooted, I grant you," replied Gonsalez; "but the hot-headed king had a new purpose, that brooked no delay. He would have instant despatch. He

would ratify the treaty before the sun rose again to throw light upon it. He would give hand and glove on it, sign and seal in the presence of his council, that Don Pedro should forthwith confirm the contract to the Infanta of Arragon. Now dost thou understand me?"

"I do," answered Diego; "but what of that? In what can the impatience of Alonso to have his son wedded to the princess of Arragon affect me? Whilst Donna Ines is faithless and cold, and refuses my aid to save her from the perils by which she is surrounded, what have I to hope?"

"Oh, content you there!" said Gonsalez; "you have all to hope. It can do all. I will be brief: Don Pedro, openly before the council, refused compliance, defied the authority of his father, and would do nothing in the way of obedience, save that he consented to head the men-at-arms who are to be sent out to bring this Don Sanchez to reason. All who were present, the king himself, laid this refusal solely to the score of Ines de Castro; and so long as she holds him in thraldom it is thought he will never wed. Now mark me:—Alonso prides himself on seeing justice, as he calls it, rigidly fulfilled; especially when it coincides with his own interest. Plead thy contract, given many years since, with the consent of Donna Ines and her father. My life for it, she is yours at a word."

"It is impossible," said Diego; "I am a banished man—banished for having struck with my dagger the heir of Portugal."

"No matter," replied Gonsalez. "Hadst thou struck the king himself, and yet would now step forward to uphold thy claim to rid him of this hinderance to his son's advancement, this Donna Ines, thy pardon would be ensured, thy claim would be received, thy banishment recalled, and thou mightst carry on with sure effect our future plans; whilst, should failure or any other accident drive thee back to Castile, the part thou hast played here to give intelligence to the friends of Peter the Cruel would give thee a certain claim to the forfeited lands of old Manuel de Castro. Say, is not mine a scheme worth the trial?"

"But how to execute it?" replied Diego. "Whilst my sentence of banishment is unrepealed, I dare not openly appear in Portugal."

"Leave that to me," said Gonsalez, "I will prepare all things to make smooth the way for the attempt. The king shall be so warned, so dealt with, as to desire thy appearing.

You know the day of St. Francis is at hand: now mark my farther counsel. On that day the king feasts the court. A bull-fight, such as in splendour has not been seen for many a year, is devised for the entertainment of the populace. Don Pedro will be absent; and the king, following an ancient custom of the realm, has given out, that, in honour of the memory of the good St. Francis, he will, so soon as the lists are closed, receive appeals from all those who have aught to claim, even though it should affect his royal house. Now dost thou understand me?—We will speak farther of this anon, and devise other necessary matters. Thou art wearied; betake thee to rest. To-morrow we meet again; and in the mean time I will work my rude plan into a shape more perfect."

"But I fear," said Don Diego, "should I fail ——"

"Fear not, and fail not—be that thy motto," answered Gonsalez: "I will stir up friends to aid thee. Leave the rest to me."

They parted for the night, after a brief conference, in which Gonsalez intimated his design to lose not an hour in such preparatory measures as he deemed necessary before the day of St. Francis should arrive.

The preparations for the great festival mentioned by Gonsalez were, indeed, magnificent. An open space, in a beautiful valley not far from Cintra, was appointed as the arena for the principal sports of the day. It lay embosomed amid a wild tract of hills, whose high and abrupt forms aspired to a mountainous character. A dark forest of pine trees clothed the sides of the boldest eminence to the north; whilst, lively in colour, and beautiful in contrast, that to the south displayed the vivid greens of oaks and elms, and many a grey poplar, as it rose above the cottage of the vinedresser or the husbandman.

The day of the festival at length arrived. Scarcely was the glimmering light of dawn seen in the east, when hundreds left their beds, eager to prepare for the expected sports. Cintra poured out her inhabitants from her gates in such throngs, that it seemed as if the houses within them would be left desolate. Every hamlet, nay, every surrounding cottage, was deserted; so deep was the interest excited in the breast of the populace by the savage spectacle of a bull-fight.

The morning was delightful as it broke over earth and sea; and soon the kindling heavens, the mountains, their high tops tinged with brilliant light, the rocks and wandering rivers, the dew-spangled herb, the cities of men, and the wild woods of

nature, were all seen shining and glowing, and animated by the presence of the majestic sun, which, as a conqueror, went forth in triumph to begin another day.

The arena was a wide circus, encompassed with raised seats; and towards the eastern extremity were seen three open, elevated, and magnificent pavilions, where the king, the court, the fairest ladies of the realm, and most of its nobility, were to take their seats as spectators. Those of the clergy who held no distinguished rank, the hidalgos, and the commons, were to occupy the benches below.

At an early hour the marshals, toridors, matadors, and heralds, who had each some office to fill on this occasion, had taken their stations; and though the noble animals which were to combat had been confined within a strong enclosure, communicating with the lists, and could not be seen till they were, one by one, let loose for battle, yet their deep bellowing met the ear in sounds calculated to raise expectation, if not terror.

In a short time, those places open to the populace were filled to overflowing. Strange and motley was the scene. Women, some with infants in their arms, men of every rank in society, the warrior knight, the trusty squire, the light-footed page, the jovial ecclesiastic, the ascetic monk, the merchant, whose vine and olive yards brought him wealth from distant lands, the simple mechanic, the expounder of the laws, the griping taxman, and the conquered and taxed Moor, who was often the victim of his hard hearted avarice,—all, all were seen, opposite as they were in character, yet now governed by one feeling, and intent on one and the same sports: so much does the stimulus of curiosity bring mankind upon a level; and, like death itself, whatever be their station, stows them all within as small a compass as that of a well-filled churchyard.

We do not dwell on the magnificence of the pavilions, hung, as they were, with whatever is costly in velvets, silks, gold, and tapestry. It is living objects we would rather depict; and yet, if mute things may be said to have a voice responsive to pleasure, the very woods, around the valley, seemed to take up and repeat the glad sounds of the mellow horns, the loud clash of the Moorish cymbals, the braying trumpet, and the "spirit-stirring drum," as their concord of wild harmony proclaimed the advance of the noble cavalcade. The procession was headed by several members of the religious and military order of the Wing. These appeared mounted on their war-horses, whose sides were covered with splendid housings of

silk, embroidered with the arms of the order. The long white robes of the knights, their glittering bacinets of steel, glancing and flashing as the sun shone upon them, the azure wing on a ground of gold, that was seen on their robes and streaming banners, attracted the gaze of the multitude as they advanced; their horses so governed and checked by the bridle as to maintain a slow and stately pace, whilst, by tossing their heads and champing the bit, they seemed impatient of the restraint to which they were compelled to submit their strength by the mastery of man. The knights were followed by the order of Christ, also a military as well as religious body, whose chief distinction was that of a silver cross, embroidered like a breast-plate on the forepart of their robes. The order of St. James then advanced in the same state and manner.

Next appeared, led on by a guard of knights, esquires, heralds, chamberlains, nobles, and minstrels, Alonso the Brave, dressed in royal robes, and mounted on a steed milk white and beautiful, that "his aspiring rider seemed to know." Proudly he paced on; and as his master ever and anon stopped for a moment to return the greetings of the multitude, the animal pawed the ground and reared his arched neck, and shook his costly mane, that hung like tresses of the softest silk. The spectacle of both horse and rider was indeed princely. Alonso wore only a light suit of body armour under his robes; and on his head a cap of velvet, surrounded by a circle of gold and jewels. His bold and dark brow, his countenance, in whose lofty expression there was the dignity as well as the terror of a warrior king, were calculated to strike and to awe; so that even those who murmured in secret, who were plotting against his government, and longed to tear the crown from his head, nevertheless, as he passed like some mighty power before their sight, felt the ascendency of his great spirit, and, with involuntary feeling, bowed the knee in homage, or cried aloud, "God preserve thee, noble king!"

His very banner, that was borne before him by the esquire of the royal body, seemed to speak his lofty spirit. Its devise was an eagle on the wing, with this motto—*Altiora Peto.* So engrossing was the presence of Alonso, that, though attended by a circle from one of the most brilliant courts at that time in Europe, when as the distinguished persons who helped to form it appeared, they scarcely seemed to occupy a thought, the eyes of all being fixed upon the king; on whom they gazed with the attention which men exhibit when contemplating a gallant ship as she rides majestically upon the deep,

whilst the little barks or vessels that follow in her wake are almost wholly unnoticed.

Yet soon a train appeared, whose presence, though less imposing, was, as far as personal charms have power to please, yet more dazzling than that of the king and his companions. This was the crowd of ladies that surrounded the queen of Portugal, and the Infanta, princess Mary. The queen, Beatrice of Castile, was of a calm and dignified deportment. Though time had rifled in her countenance those beauties which distinguished it in youth, still, even in decay, enough was left to testify that superior loveliness had once been hers. The princess Mary in nothing resembled the queen. Far greater was her likeness to Alonso. She had in her features all the prominent characteristics which distinguished his, yet wanting that open expression which in her father had an air of frankness well suited to his military deportment. The princess's countenance was, on the whole, such as we like not to see in woman. It was stern and masculine, without any redeeming beauty.

Many and noble were the ladies of the court. Yet there was one who, whilst she retired as much as her situation would allow from the public gaze, far outshone them all—the lovely Ines de Castro, the secret and unhappy wife of the heir to Portugal's crown. Her dress was azure. A few jewels decorated her neck and arms. She wore a loose crimson mantle over her coat-hardie—then much in fashion with ladies when they rode abroad. Over her graceful head and shoulders hung a thin veil of silver tissue. On this day her station in the procession was not a prominent one; as she mixed, perhaps purposely, with many of the inferior ladies of the court, who were somewhat crowded around her. Yet neither these, nor the light gauze, could conceal from observation her all-surpassing beauty; though, as the sun in the splendour of his meridian gives a lustre to those very clouds that would conceal his face, even so did the presence of Ines de Castro render more brilliant that inferior company of which she was the centre and the light.

As she passed along, two knights, mounted and richly caparisoned (who had kept somewhat aloof, and had drawn their horses up on the turf, leaving the road free for the cavalcade), gazed upon her with intense interest. "By the rood," exclaimed the tallest of these to his companion, "she is lovely as the lone lily by the springs of water, as an Arabian inditer of rhymes would say, did he now gaze on so

goodly a creature. Fair is she, most fair to look on; and there is that about her brow full of majesty and sweetness. There is soul and intelligence in every line of her countenance. By the mass, but that I am thy sworn brother in arms, I could almost be tempted to play false friend, and cast in my own venture for so fair a prize. Thou art a happy man, Diego, if the king gives her to thee."

"It may be so," replied Diego, for it was he who now answered his friend Gonsalez; "yet I doubt it is scarcely a knightly act to win woman's love by force. In her absence I am prone to design, and bold to execute; but when I see her, her very eye makes a coward of me, though it speaks not but benignantly. I have almost a mind to give way to these suggestions, which, possibly, are those of some guardian spirit, and return whence I came—an injured man myself, yet injuring no one."

"Why, how now! Don Diego," said Gonsalez, in a tone bordering on sarcastic scorn. "Hast thou been closeted this morning with some penitential monk, who has preached to thee most godly lessons of patience and forbearance—telling thee how Christian-like it is to put up with a woman's falsehood for the sake of her fair fame; to swear her lightest whim is of more value than thy own honour; and that the buffet which her princely lover, thy rival, lent thee for daring to think thou hadst some claim on thy affianced bride, was to be most quietly endured—nay, that, when he smote thee on the one cheek, far from resenting the blow, thou shouldst have turned to him the other? Death! to hear a man talk thus; to see him quake befere the eye of a pale-faced wench, and yet write himself comrade in our brave enterprise!"

"Forbear," said Diego in a low voice, whilst the convulsed motion of his lips, and the scowl of a dark malign passion, as it overspread his brow, shewed how deeply he felt these caustic and stinging sarcasms of Gonsalez, pointed as they were, in reference to the injuries he had received from Ines, and calculated to call up, or renew, at a moment so critical, the bitter resentments he entertained against Don Pedro. "Forbear, Gonsalez," he continued; "every man has his weak moments; I have mine. But they are gone; they fly before the breathings of my just resentments like chaff before the wind. I feel my injuries, I know what they demand, and I can be iron-hearted, ay, and iron-handed too, as well as thyself. So no more of this. Didst thou mark the king?"

"I did. What of that?"

"I thought," continued Diego, "that he looked upon me, as he passed along, with an inquiring eye, yet not an angry one; as if he knew or guessed who I was, and would give me confidence to approach him. Didst thou mark it?"

"Ay," said Gonsalez, "that did I. Me he knew well enough, as I dropped my lance to him. And marked you how he reined up his steed, paused a moment, and returned your salutation with fixed attention? He looked full at you, and smiled, as he waved his hand, ere he passed on."

"Yet I like not to see Alonso smile," said Diego; "for there is that in it, like the playful mood of a lion, which shews in its very sport the nature of the mighty brute; and that sport itself may change into fury, as speedily as the black thunder-cloud becomes a sheet of light and fire. I will not trust the king's appearance, no, nor his better purpose, for all thy vaunting it."

"Then trust his evil purpose, and repose in that for thy safety," replied Gonsalez. "Trust me, the man who will be the means to remove from him Ines de Castro, that powerful obstacle to his son's marriage with Arragon, need fear neither smile nor frown from Alonso."

"The prince, Don Pedro, you say is absent," observed Diego. "Are you sure he is departed?"

"Ay, at the head of his hundred lances," said Gonsalez; "gone to offer terms to his rebel uncle, or to thrust them down his throat at the sword's point. He is gone; and let us but play our game well in his absence, and whatever he may do, it shall but forward our great purpose, and fan the fire of discontent. Nay, follow my counsel, and Alonso shall be brought to reason when he has served our turn. I fear not for Don Sanchez, he is bravely manned and armed; and those Castilian caterpillars that now surround the king and feed on the state, those caterpillars, I say, that devour, as the locusts did in Egypt, every green leaf in Portugal, they shall be torn from their hold, and crushed, like reptiles as they are, under foot; whilst thou wilt be ——"

"Tell me not what I shall be," replied Diego; "for in after-times, it may be, men will give a name to him who does what I am about to do, such as I would not brook did aught human speak it now I am a living man."

"Wherefore thus unresolved?" said Gonsalez. "Be determined, or be nothing. Thy mind, Diego (so is it constituted), hath neither the courage to do what it deems evil, nor yet the constancy to forsake it. Shadows of thy own

imaginings affright thee. Say, wilt thou bear injuries or resent them? There needs no other question."

"I will resent them, and that to the death," replied Diego.

"Forward, then," said Gonsalez. "Remember, after the sports. Art thou prepared?"

"I am," answered Diego.

"On, then, in the name of all that is manly," said Gonsalez; "and do thyself right."

They both turned their horses' heads, gained the road, and joined the stream as it flowed towards the arena.

Amongst the crowd that pressed forward as spectators of the sports, there were many Moors, who, notwithstanding the contempt they were certain to meet with, felt quite as keenly as those of a fairer complexion the strong impulse of curiosity, and that excitement which is ever produced by national games. The Moors, indeed, felt a more than ordinary interest in these sports; as, in the days of their prosperity, they were famed for the magnificence of their bull-fights. Cordova and Granada in Spain (the latter, at the date of our narrative, a kingdom formidable in its wars with the Christians) did not yield to any cities in the splendour of such animating exhibitions. The skill of the Moors in running at the ring, in reed games, and other exercises, was also celebrated; so that even these unfortunate individuals of this once famous people, who now endured the yoke of conquest in Portugal, were roused at the very summons to a bull-fight, like the war-horse, which, though no longer fit for action, is said to start at the sound of the trumpet, as if impatient for the field of battle.

Amongst those who took their seats on the lower benches, was Hassan the Talba, Hamet the young sharif, and Cassim the herdsman. They had been early comers, and for some time occupied a station to which no one approached. Hamet, with the eager curiosity of youth, that finds a pleasure in every thing new, whether trifling or important, examined, with a delighted eye, the splendour of the pavilions of gold, the beautiful tapestry, the attire of the nobles, the lovely forms and faces of the ladies, and the brilliant dresses of the knights. All these excited his admiration, and he seemed to forget every thing save the magnificent objects that met his gaze. Not so the Talba: there was in the countenance of Hassan a look of pride, mingled with disdain, as if he were out of his place; and, therefore, felt dissatisfied with those very sports that had drawn him to the arena. Cassim, who neither displayed the proud reserve of Hassan, nor the eager curiosity

of Hamet, seemed to be chiefly intent on observing what passed around him, in order to feed his own humour, whose highest relish was found in ridiculing the follies as well as the vices of mankind.

And now the sounds of minstrelsy, loud bursts from the populace, the braying of trumpets, and the simultaneous movement of all who were within or around the arena, proclaimed the approach of the king, who rode directly into the lists, followed by his train, and paced them round ere he dismounted to take his station in the pavilion.

The warlike figure, the dignified air, and the lofty, though stern, countenance of Alonso, failed not to impress young Hamet, who beheld him for the first time, with an involuntary feeling of admiration. He knew the king to have been the enemy of his father, of his people, and of himself; yet, so apt is youth to be dazzled by the splendour of majesty, while the imagination, more active than the judgment at such an age, yields to the impression made on the senses, that, "See!" he exclaimed, "how noble is Alonso! He sits his horse as if he and the animal were one. It seems to obey his thought rather than his hand. There is that about Alonso which stamps him a leader of armies. He looks what he is, a king!"

"And a tyrant king, over a conquered, an enslaved people," said Hassan. "Have you forgot he is the enemy, the victor, the spoiler of him, who was also once a king—thy father! Thou art Alcanzor's son! Have you forgot this?"

"No!" cried Hamet, his eye kindling at the suggestions of his own feelings. "My heart swells within me when I look upon Alonso. I am glad that he is thus princely; that he, against whom I would unsheath my father's sword, is no mean man. It is poor sport when the hunter pursues the timid hare; but the lion of the desert is worthy game, since it requires courage and a free spirit to rouse him from his lair, and meet him when he turns to bay. It were a poor deed to vow vengeance on the king, but that he is warlike."

"You talk well, my dear young master," said Cassim. "But bold words are much safer than bold deeds; though, in a place like this, it were more prudent to keep peace; for, did not the tumult around us render our words inaudible, except to our own ears, it might be that, though given under the figure of lions and hares, a challenge to Alonso the Brave from a youth, who is a Moor, and who never yet did battle, saving with such pleasant enemies as the denizens of the woods—it might be, I say, that such a challenge were answered by the master of the king's whips and gyves in the old

dungeon of the castle of Cintra. Trust me, Hamet, that man was no fool who thought silence to be wisdom in doubtful company."

"Then practise it thyself," replied Hamet, "for I will speak my heart, though my head pay for it."

"Which it would be very like to do, if but a bird of the air should carry your challenge to the king. Be wise, youth, if it is but for thy mother's sake."

"Well, you have schooled me," said Hamet; and his countenance fell as he yielded to the friendly reproof of the herdsman. "But there is no want of wisdom I trow, in talking of inanimate things; so, for want of other matter, I will even tell thee, that, notwithstanding I could find a warmer theme for discourse, I am well content to-day to be pleased with what I see. These decorations are magnificent: I never saw so splendid a preparation."

"Because you are young," said Hassan, whose recollections of the sports of the Moors, before they were so degraded, acted on his mind with something like an envious spirit, that could not brook to see in another people what his own no longer could boast. "You have never seen the arena prepared for the bull-fights of Cordova, of Granada, or of the now conquered Algarva. It was in such places that the Moorish kings soared, even in their very sports, as much above these Christian princes as the vast mountains of Estramadura soar above the little hills that crouch at their feet like slaves. Hadst thou ever seen the Alhambra and its arena, what were such a sight as this! The Alhambra was a palace fit for him, who, like Kaled, the conqueror of Damascus, might be called the sword of God. To form a dwelling-place for the kings of thy father's people, the marble rocks yielded their choicest veins; the cedar, whose stately head rises as lord of the forests, was felled to line its halls and its roofs. Its hundred courts were of alabaster, and its doors of brass were overlaid with gold. Numberless were its refreshing fountains, never failing, as the stars of heaven shone on their streams by night, and the sun played its beams upon them by day. It was there where lived our Moorish princes; those great chastisers of idolatry, they who, at the command of the prophet of the Faithful, cut off with the sword all such as would give the only true God partners in that worship, in that honour due to him alone. Such were the dwellings of our ancient kings, whilst liberty reposed beneath their shadow."

"Peace," cried Cassim; "let us remove from this seat, for here comes Arias Coello, the taxman."

"Arias Coello, the taxman!" exclaimed young Hamet, "and I move because he comes hither! I will not stir an inch. I will keep my seat, though he comes supported by his band of archers and officers, who hang the keys of prison doors at their girdles, and carry fetters and chains with them, to fright Moorish boys and women if they fail or murmur to pay the tax. Arias Coello bandied words with my mother last year; he called yesterday evening when I was from home, and behaved insolently. He is not yet paid. If I quit my seat he will think I fear him. Not an inch will I stir, nor any greeting will I shew him."

So saying, young Hamet, who had before been standing and looking around him, immediately seated himself, and with an angry eye looked the taxman directly in the face, as he seemed to enjoy the opportunity thus afforded him of taking his seat near the Moors, conscious, from circumstances that had recently passed, his presence was particularly disagreeable to young Hamet. We here must pause a moment to say something respecting this man and his office.

Alonso the Brave had been much commended for laying a tax on every conquered Moor who was suffered to live by the labour of his hands in Portugal, instead of being held in prison, sent to the galleys, or put to death. Though this tax, as laid on a heathen people, had received the applause of the church, it is much to be doubted if it did not produce many evils. The depressed state of the Moors after the signal victories in Algarva, their poverty and hard life, were all sufficient misfortunes to keep down their spirit; but this tax, which carried with it personal humiliation, and the idea, rather than the reality, of slavery, was an irritating imposition; and the Moors, who conceived it to be a payment for the freedom of breathing the very air necessary to their existence, not only murmured under it, but, as it more than once appeared, by rebellions often formidable, endeavoured to shake it off. None but the old, the weak, and the helpless, paid it without complaint. Some even carried their obstinacy so far as to endure the imprisonment to which they were liable, rather than yield to what they believed an act that gave their own sanction to slavery.

At first, men of inferior note were appointed to collect this tax and see it duly paid; but the frequent quarrels, brawls, and even fatal affrays, that took place during these collections, induced the government to appoint a man of some quality as chief taxman, whose power and authority would be more likely to compel obedience, or command assistance, in

cases of necessity. To this chief all the minor taxmen were amenable, and he made it a custom occasionally to join them on their collecting days, to see that they properly enforced the law.

So much for the office. For the man who filled it, great discrimination had been found necessary in the choice; as every Portuguese, of any quality, in whose bosom there was one spark of generous feeling, or of self-respect, declined, however opulent it might make him, to become so odious an officer as chief taxman over the Moors, under an arbitrary king. At last, Arias Coello was fixed upon, not only as an efficient person, but as one who felt no scruples whatever in regard to the duties he had to perform.

It was this Arias Coello who now approached the benches, in order to take his seat near some of those very people who so hated him, as they groaned beneath the yoke which his hand pressed still sorer upon them. He was a man about fifty years old, and of middle stature; but whose broad shoulders, ill-proportioned, thick, and unsightly limbs, gave him the appearance of being much shorter than he really was. His features were hard, thin, and strongly marked. A pair of curly jet-black mustachios grew above his upper lip, so as almost to hide his mouth; and a row of teeth, white and projecting, became prominently disagreeable by their close contrast to this sable fringe upon his lips and chin. An eye, small, quick, and black, was shaded by a large pair of eyebrows; and though he had that down look which is frequently seen in men whose minds are bent on close dark schemes of hypocrisy, yet whenever he ventured to raise his eye, so that the countenance could be viewed at once, there was about it an expression of keen intelligence and penetration, such as indicated sense and talent. In a word, the figure of Arias Coello, considered apart from his dress, was exactly such as the timid and doubtful traveller would start at if he met it by the wayside in a solitary road, for he had much the look of a sharp-witted cut-throat.

He was attired in black velvet; a cap and hood of the same material formed the finishing ornament of such a head as we have but feebly succeeded in describing. A chain of massive gold, to which was appended a medallion as a token of office, hung round his neck. He wore a gypsire, richly embroidered, by way of pocket. He had no arms, save a poniard, stuck into a broad belt. Such was the chief taxman in his exterior; for character there was no want of correspondence.

If his person was repulsive, his manners were not less so.

No man loved him, yet not a few feared him. And as fear, as well as esteem, often procures much external deference and respect, Arias Coello was quite satisfied with the effect, without troubling himself as to the cause, of that ascendency he was careful to maintain. Cold in temper, hard-hearted, griping, and avaricious, extortion and imposition with him supplied the place of passions in ordinary minds. Faithful to his trust, for he shewed that virtue in the exercise of his hideous authority, he was as scrupulous as severe, and as unrelenting in his extortions respecting the tax for the crown as if he had collected the whole on his own account. Cold and solitary in his habits, he made no one a friend; yet he suffered no one to become an open enemy, without shewing some resentment in his own heartless or calculating manner; so that even his own associates, who often cursed him, took care that such curses should not fall within ear-shot of Arias.

There was but one man who used and yet despised him to his face—that man was the king. And Arias, like those dogs whose nature is more savage than noble, would take a buffet from the hand of one so resolute, whilst he would have flown at the throat of any less bold or less exalted a person. He now took his seat near the Moors in sullen silence. Dark looks passed between them, but not a word was spoken. However, such ill neighbours, perhaps, would not long have been at peace, had not the attention of the warm-hearted Hamet, the cold-blooded taxman, of Hassan, Cassim, as well as every one else, been diverted by the signal that the arena was about to be cleared for the sports.

By this time Alonso had taken his sest beneath the pavilion. The queen was on his right, the infanta on his left. These royal personages were in an elevated situation, surrounded by the most ancient nobility of the realm. The lady Ines de Castro sat towards the side of the pavilion, on the front row that immediately looked over the arena; so that had she dropped the spreading feathers of the peacock which she held in her hand, a sort of fan common at the period, it would have fallen into the lists.

There was a momentary stillness in the crowd and amongst the spectators, whilst the persons appointed for that duty paced and examined the arena to see all obstacles removed. This silence was broken by the blast of a trumpet which sounded thrice without the barriers, and was immediately followed by the appearance of two mounted cavaliers who entered within the circle. They wore no armour; as such defence, necessary in the tournament, would have been reckoned a cowardly or

unfair protection against an enemy whose weapon was not a lance in hand, but horns on his head.

The dress of these knights was, according to the custom of the country (founded indeed on the customs of the despised Moors, for by them had it been originally introduced), expressive of those passions supposed to be predominant in the minds of the wearers. The foremost knight was attired in black and yellow silk, richly decorated with gold and embroidery—these colours were expressive of sorrow. On his head he wore a light steel cap, closed round the face, and covering the chin as high as the under lip. A panache of white feathers waved above the crown. In his right hand he carried a light lance, and on his bridle arm a small round shield of leather, on which was seen no device, but this motto, "Fear not, and fail not." His horse was covered with rich housings, but much shorter than such as, resembling petticoats for the animals, were used at the tournament.

The companion of this knight, whom our readers will readily recognise as Don Alvaro Gonsalez, the friend of Diego, was clad in green, the emblem of hope. On his round shield appeared a star guiding a ship, with the words, "I point the way."

Both cavaliers were gallantly mounted. As they passed before the pavilion, they lowered their lances in token of respect, and made their well-trained horses kneel thrice before the king. A burst of music suddenly proclaimed that the monarch allowed the combat, whilst he raised a staff he held in his hand, as director of the sports; accompanying the action with these words, "Be thy arms strong and thy hearts fearless!"

Having thus paid their duty to the king, the knights raised their lances, returned to the opposite side of the lists, and stood ready to receive their opponent when he should be let loose against them. All persons now had quitted the arena, save such as had some part to sustain in the ensuing scene. These we shall briefly name; and we believe that the like offices are to this day pretty much the same both in Spain and Portugal at the festival of a bull-fight, though the splendour of the modern exhibition can no longer be compared to that of the Middle Ages. The assistants of the toridor, or mounted cavalier, were called the chulos. Besides these were the banderillas or foot combatants, and also the matadors. Of each we shall have occasion to speak as they are called into action. The scene, however, requires another chapter.

CHAPTER XI.

Heaven in thy good cause make thee prosperous,
Rouse up thy youthful blood, be valiant and live!
SHAKSPEARE.

THE blast of a single trumpet gave the signal: in a moment the multitude became hushed. All eyes were now fixed on the spot whence the bull would issue forth. Expectation, raised to the highest pitch, appeared in every face, but was too strong for speech. In another moment the barriers were thrown open; and the profound silence was alone broken by the burst of the mighty animal as he rushed into the arena. Jason—so was he called (for the fighting bulls of this period always bore a name, like a racehorse at the present day)—Jason, then stood still, looked about him, and, as his eyes, large, lively, and full of rage, gazed around for an instant, he seemed as if he were selecting the object he would attack.

His form, proportions, and general appearance, excited the admiration of those who might be termed connoisseurs in such points as were most esteemed in the stubborn brute that was to be tortured and baited for the brutal gratification of man. The long muzzle of the animal, his ample chine and breast, his broad and lashing tail, the savage expression of his countenance, all drew forth praise; and as he paused but to confront his enemy Don Diego, who, with pointed lance, was spurring on his horse to the attack, the multitude grew loud in their shouts and plaudits; as it was deemed an infallible mark of spirit, if the bull darted forward to meet the assault without being previously irritated.

His loud bellowings shook the circus, as acute, vigorous, quick of eye and hand, Don Diego darted into his neck the short lance with which he was provided for that purpose. It broke in the violence of the onset, but remained fixed in the wound. The infuriated animal, that needed no other provocation to extreme rage, bent his head, and rushed upon the horse with the intent to rip up his side. The skill and dexterity of the rider saved the good steed from a fate as common as it was horrid—that of having the entrails laid open by so dreadful a weapon as the horns of a wild bull.

With one bound, Don Diego leapt his horse aside, and left the brute to his career. He snatched another lance that was ready in the hand of a matador, whilst two or three banderillas were employed in torturing the animal as he was deceived and kept at bay by a chulos, or foot combatant; for as the chulos shook before the head of Jason a red cloak (leaping aside and giving way to his attacks with a nimbleness of foot and dexterity of action only to be compared to the marmoset as he springs from branch to branch) the banderillas—so called from carrying in their hands little banners with sharp forked heads—darted them into his neck and sides, tearing the flesh, torturing and irritating the animal, till his fury was wrought into absolute madness.

It was now that Don Gonsalez spurred on his horse, so as to meet the infuriated vengeance that the bull seemed determined to wreak upon his tormentors. Apparently his strength, as is the case with fevers in the human subject, had become tenfold by the excitement and tortures he had endured; for so swift had been his attacks, so continued the rush he had made to gore with his horns, that it was now his turn to keep the foot combatants at bay.

Gonsalez, who, in order to shew his skill, prolonged as much as possible the fight, now raised his lance; struck it into the throat of the bull, then started aside, and rode to the extremity of the arena, followed by the maddened brute, that lashed his tail and bellowed after him. The danger of Gonsalez was extreme, for he had broken his lance, and was now without one; but he avoided the attack he could not meet, by wheeling his horse again and again, whilst every curvette was made with such admirable address that he let the bull be apparently close upon him ere he escaped by these manœuvres. They were hailed and greeted with the yells, rather than the applause, of the spectators.

Yet, however bold Don Gonsalez might be, or proud of his skill, he ventured to practise it somewhat too long; for whether the horse stumbled, or the rider for a moment missed his purpose, certain it is, that the bull at last, with terrific force, ran down both horse and man. A cry of horror burst from the arena: but ere the banderillas, the chulos, or the matadors, could aim a poniard to dispatch the animal, Don Diego was at his side; and darting his lance directly into the part where the spinal marrow communicates with the head, the bull instantly fell, and his huge sides shook with convulsions, the last effort of expiring nature. In another moment he lay motion-

less, terrible even in death, whilst the smoke yet rose from his distended nostrils. Don Gonsalez was senseless, stunned by his fall; and never would he have awakened in this world but for the bold and dexterous stroke by which Don Diego had so admirably rescued him from a dreadful fate. He was borne from the lists, whilst the king, the court, and the multitude arose simultaneously from their seats, and hailed Diego with the plaudits due to a deliverer. Wild bursts of music also spoke his triumph; and it was with an air of conscious desert as well as dignity, that Don Diego, after repeatedly bowing in acknowledgment to the applause of the circus, retired without the lists, in order to give some orders for the recovery of his friend.

In the mean time other combatants appeared; more than one bull was slain, and the carcass, with ropes fastened to the horns, was dragged out from the arena by mules, ornamented with ribbons and bells about their heads, that were held in readiness thus to remove the slaughtered animals. Ere Don Diego returned to the lists, a circumstance occurred, so extraordinary that we must here notice it.

A bull that had been sufficiently tormented by a mounted cavalier, was left to be dealt with by the foot combatants. The banderillas having greatly tortured the creature with the sharp points of their banners, the fury of the bull became redoubled; he roared, tossed his head, tore up the ground, and aggravated the anguish of his wounds by the violence of his own impetuous efforts. Bathed in blood, but not exhausted, he prepared for another onset; when the blast of a trumpet, by order of the king, spoke the signal that death should end his torments. The matador, that finisher of the law within the precincts of an arena, advanced, holding in his right hand the poniard of mercy—for so it might be called,—and, in the other, shaking a red piece of drapery at the object destined for destruction.

They came opposite to each other; when both bull and matador made a dead pause, stood fixed and motionless, surveying each other as if watchful for the least advantage that should decide the combat or parry the fatal stroke. The silence of general expectation and suspense, at this moment, was profound: but at the very instant the eye of the matador, so keen in its object, so true in its end, was directing the death stroke that never fails, the bull, as if conscious of his purpose and the impossibility of escape—for he would be struck dead ere he could destroy his foe—made a desperate

effort to avoid what he could not resist, and bounding forward, rushed towards one of the extremities of the arena, leapt the barrier, and was close on that bench on which was seated Arias Coello, whose life was in the most imminent danger.

Hassan and Cassim were in the seats behind him; and ere the astonished and affrighted taxman, deprived of all presence of mind by the suddenness of his danger, attempted to escape by throwing himself over the second bench, Hamet, who, Moor as he was in temper as well as blood, in the midst of his virtues had some of the savage feelings that disgraced his people, started up and gave a shout, not of alarm, but of triumph. The act as well as the feeling was momentary. His better spirit got the mastery; and he, who but an instant before exulted at the danger of the odious oppressor of his race, would, had he the means, have saved him from a horrid fate.

Danger, however, was averted by the matador; for, following close after, he struck the bull, as he became entangled in the benches, and dispatched him ere Arias, who had been knocked down by the animal, could arise, or recover presence of mind to thank his deliverer. But though thus slow in feeling the extent of an obligation, Arias was quick-sighted and quick-eared enough to an injury. The triumphant shout of Hamet, his wild gestures and the clapping of his hands—a common mode of expressing joy amongst his people—had not escaped the taxman; and he no sooner could gain breath enough to speak, than he sharply attacked Hamet in the bitterest and most insulting language. Hamet's Moorish blood boiled in his veins, and he replied haughtily and fiercely to his accuser, till words grew so high that Arias exclaimed, "By the rood, I swear, I will carry my complaint of this day's insult where I shall find those who shall chastise thee for it. Nay more; dost thou not know, thou insolent boy, that thou art in my power?—Ay, in my power," continued the taxman, as he raised his hand, and shook it before Hamet's face; "thou hast passed the day on which the tax on thy cursed head should be told down and paid: I could, did I choose to be a hard man, fetter thy limbs, and cast thee into prison for the failure. Ask my mercy then, confess thy insolence, kneel, plead for pardon, and it may be I will forgive thee as a base-minded slave, beneath any notice save that of my contempt."

"Slave?" cried Hamet, as his dark eye glowed like a ball of fire, and he placed his hand upon the hunting-knife he wore by his side. Hassan, who saw the action, and knew

the danger to which Hamet would be exposed, even if he did but draw his weapon in a threatening manner, not to say anything of using it, which in his hot mood was like enough to happen, interfered and endeavoured to soothe the irritated youth. But Hamet was not to be so easily quieted. He shook himself free from Hassan, burst from Cassim, who would have laid hold on him, and coming close up to Arias Coello, so soon as his deep passion would give him breath to articulate his words, cried aloud, as he stamped his foot upon the ground, "Slave! slave! and from thee, thou base-minded groveling wretch, who even with thy own people art held no better than the vilest executioner of the law? Nay, not so honoured; for he who strikes a head from the block is thought more worthy than the griping cold-blooded taxman! The executioner takes life at one stroke, whilst thou dost lay thy hand upon the poor, the old, the widow, and the fatherless, to keep them lingering in misery. I defy thee; I spurn thee as I would a dog that is an offence to me!"

"By the holy saints of heaven! what means this?" cried Arias: "wilt thou murder me? Take thy hand from my throat, or I will cry aloud for help. But for the blessed St. Francis, in honour of whose day I am here, yon bull had slain me: whilst thou didst clap thy hands and exulted in it, as good sport. Off, off, vile boy! Will no one interfere? will no one save me from this infidel Moor?"

"I despise thee too much to harm thee," said Hamet; "and as for saving thee, thou art too accursed to find help from saints or man."

"Call me not accursed," replied Arias; "the curse is on thee, infidel. I wonder thou art not blasted on the spot, and that the good St. Francis did not send forth fire from the earth, so that, like Dathan and Abiram, thou shouldst go down into hell alive!"

"I heed not your saints," said Hamet; "your blocks and stones that you hew out of rocks, quarries, and woods, making them as Allah, and kneeling to them instead of to Him who is God of heaven, of earth—whose habitation is eternity! What is thy St. Francis? A dotard monk when alive—a block now dead! He curse me? He send fire to devour me? I hold him as accursed as I do thee!"

"Hear!" cried Arias Coello, who now saw to what danger the wild fury of Hamet's passion exposed him, and was resolved to seize on the opportunity thus afforded for a most ample and fearful revenge; hear the wretch; he blasphemeth!

In the name of the holy church, of the saints, above all of the blessed St. Francis, thus reviled by an infidel, a heathen, a heretic, I call on all Christians to assist me. Seize on this wretch; I witness against him for the crime of blasphemy. Seize him, officers. Take him before the king; let Alonso hear the crime; let the king, the church, and the people, pronounce punishment on this horrid blasphemer of God's holy saints and spirits."

At a time, and in a country, where the most dark superstition prevailed, it is needless, perhaps, to say with what feelings of horror, with how much alacrity, Hamet was seized at the charge, and by the accusation of the taxman. Arias Coello was so hated by the populace, that, had the insult been confined to him alone, Hamet might have got off without much difficulty. But St. Francis was a very different person from Coello. At all times the most favourite saint of the Portuguese, that on his own day, and at a festival held in honour of his holy name, he should be thus reviled and blasphemed by a Moor, was a crime that appeared to the inflamed imagination of the bystanders worthy death itself.

The scene which followed would baffle all our attempts at description. The officers, stationed to guard the sports of the day from interruption, in a moment seized Hamet, whilst the mob drowned in their vociferations all his attempts to speak; and Hassan and Cassim, who endeavoured to plead for his youthful inexperience, as being Moors, were forcibly held back, nor were they suffered to interfere even by apology. Popular excitement easily changes its object. It follows the breath of every new tumult, as readily as the unstable cloud follows the course of the wind, and as quickly shifts its point.

In a few minutes there was a general rush towards the spot where the malignant taxman, the struggling Hamet, and the alarmed Moors, had created so sudden a disturbance; an uproar not exceeded, nay, not equalled, by any previous occurrence during the day: whilst those spectators who, either from their station in the arena, or from their rank and condition, could not sally towards the scene of tumult, looked with inquiring eyes, as if anxious to discover the cause, and asked each other what it might be that thus interrupted the progress of the sports.

In the meantime Arias Coello (who before the late violent quarrel had, it will be recollected, exchanged some sharp words with Hamet) made towards the pavilion where the king was seated, followed by the officers, who dragged along

the unfortunate youth in a manner that shewed how much he was considered an object of contempt and execration. Hassan and Cassim being forcibly withheld from him, he stood unfriended and alone. But though alone, he carried that within him which, in emergencies, can supply the place of friends—a fearless heart and a bold spirit.

Endeavouring to collect his scattered senses—for he too had been surprised and almost confounded by the suddenness of the attack, as well as by his own ungovernable passion—he stood before the king with less of embarrassment than might have been expected in one so young and unsupported. Hamet's pride also helped to give him confidence; for he was now to face his father's enemy, Alonso, and he wished to meet him unabashed. The whole affair was soon laid before the king, every circumstance highly painted and exaggerated by the bitter and malignant spirit of the accuser. Alonso listened with attention to the narrative of Arias Coello, who gave even to truth the worst colouring it would admit, and added many shades of falsehood and hatred entirely his own. The dark and angry brow of the king (who, though he felt great contempt for the priests when they asserted church privileges in opposition to his regal will, had, nevertheless, a superstitious reverence for the saints), as he listened to this accusation of insult and blasphemy, shewed the culprit he had little to hope from a judge who seemed already to have passed sentence against him.

Notwithstanding the artful manner in which Arias Coello had detailed the affair, he had been particularly attentive to stating facts; so that when Alonso turned to the accused, and asked what defence he had to make, and if he admitted the charge as true, the noble spirit of Hamet, disdaining not only falsehood, but even those excuses which verge upon it, for a moment kept him silent. At length, collecting the powers of his naturally firm mind, he looked upon the king with an aspect in which there was painted the ingenuousness of youth, and simply replied, "False lips are but the echo of the false heart. I will speak truth to thee, O king, though I die for it. I have done these things; and all I can say in my defence is this—the taxman provoked me by many insulting words, which I could ill brook, knowing how hardly he has dealt with us, who are a fallen, but still a free-born people."

"You admit the crime, then, unhappy young man," said Alonso; for there was an undaunted bearing about Hamet, which a spirit so bold as the king's could both appreciate and

admire. "Know you that you have been guilty of blasphemy?"

"You are pleased to call it such," said Hamet; "yet in me, if I, as the accused, may say as much, the offence should bear another colour to what it would in one of a Christian people; as the followers of the law of Mahomet believe there is no God but Allah, whose name is holy; and never did my tongue blaspheme the Father of men and spirits, or the prophet of his laws. For him you call St. Francis, I know him not, save by his images; and such images to us are idolatrous and abominable."

"Peace, infidel!" said the king; "even now do you blasphemeanew: know you to what punishment you stand exposed?"

"No," replied Hamet; "but this I know, that you are a king, and have the power to punish or to save."

"And what if I use the power, boy?" said the king.

"Then, for my mother's sake," answered Hamet, "I would ask you to use it as becomes a king—in mercy to the widow's only son."

"Thou dost fear death," said Alonso.

"Not for myself," cried Hamet, as he looked at Alonso with a countenance to which a high resolution gave an expression of peculiar energy: "I would not fear to meet thee, king and warrior as thou art, wouldst thou do battle with me in these lists for the honour of my father's name."

"Ha!" exclaimed the king, "that is a daring word—to me—in this place—in thy condition! By the rood! thou art over bold: a Moor, a boy, and talk thus to me? Who art thou? what is thy name?"

"My name should be better known to thee Alonso, but for the bonds of my condition—I am Hamet, the son of Alcanzor!"

A change came over the face of the king as he heard the name of his murdered enemy thus pronounced by his son. Alonso was a tyrant. He had been cruel to the Moors. Yet in his character, where vice was so strangely blended with the germs of virtue, there were many generous feelings. At this moment they predominated, as he looked upon the son of a Moorish prince, who had been rendered fatherless by his own cruelties, and who was brought down to misery by his means. Yet now to see that youthful Moor retain so high a spirit, more suited to his birth than to his actual condition—to hear him declare his just sense of past injuries with so fearless a temper, whilst he stood ready to meet the consequences of

such an avowal—made Alonso, proud as he was in his own spirit, almost envy the young captive the greatness of his constancy in so trying a scene. But, notwithstanding this, neither policy, nor his sense of what was due to religion and to a public example, would allow him to listen to the suggestions of his own generous thoughts.

"I would," said the king, "that thou hadst been other than the son of Alcanzor, who so fiercely rebelled against us; and to conquer whom so many Christians took up arms, and bit the dust, ere the Cross prevailed. Thy crime, youth, may not be forgiven. Yet it is in my power, on this day, to give thee a choice of punishment. I would do something for thee: thou hast defied me, even in my royal place. I can admire thy resolution, whilst I condemn its boldness. Listen, and make your election."

Hamet bowed in silence.

"The nature of your offence demands," continued the king, "that I should forthwith consign you to the prisons of our castle; there to remain until your crime is adjudged by the patriarch and the Church. Death would be the consequence; for not only the evidence against you is most clear, but you admit yourself guilty. A dreadful death would follow: for heretics and blasphemers perish at the stake. Yet this being the day of St. Francis, against whose holy name thou hast offended at the very festival held in honour of so great a light of the Christian faith, it is in my power to award another punishment, perhaps less fearful, yet not less fatal. It is to consign thee at once to the judgment of heaven; to bid thee expose thyself in the lists, with no arms save such as thou by chance mayst have at this moment upon thee; with no aid from man, to meet in combat one of our wild bulls in the arena; and no mercy of ours may interfere to save thee. Thou must do battle alone, unaided, till thyself or the animal perish before our sight. Make thy election. Wilt thou abide the trial of the Church, or, on the instant, offer thy boyish strength against that of the fierce monarch of the forest herds?"

"I will instantly combat the wild bull," exclaimed Hamet with eagerness: "I have no arms save my hunting-knife—I have never till now entered an arena; yet I will trust my cause to God; how much rather than to man! And Allah, who, of old, could tame the lion of the desert to make him crouch, harmless as the lamb, at the captive's foot,* even he

* The story of Daniel in the lions' den is well known to the Mahometans. So are many other portions of the Jewish history. See the Koran.

can deliver me, if it be his will! Give the word, O king; I am ready to obey thy command. If I fall, shew mercy to my mother." There was a slight tremor in the voice of Hamet as he spoke these last words, in accents so different from that elevation of tone and manner in which he had delivered the first part of his reply to the king.

"Prepare," said Alonso to the marshals of the sports; "let the lists be cleared. Let every one quit them. No matador must remain to give assistance. The youth, or the bull, must die on the spot."

"May I not have a banderilla to help me?" said Hamet.

"No," replied the king, "neither banderilla nor cloak; thou must combat as thou art; naked in all means of defence, save the knife of thy woodcraft which thou hadst about thee at the time of thy offence. It is some indulgence that we leave thee such; yet it cannot avail thee."

"Allah is great—Allah is the only conqueror," said Hamet, repeating the words of the Koran enjoined as the Moslem's prayer. "There is no God but Allah! Be he my shield and my strength!"

It would be impossible to describe the mingled emotions that now filled the hearts of all present. The youth, the fine person of Hamet, the courage he displayed, and the dreadful fate which seemed inevitable, in spite of superstition, created in the breasts of every one, except a few the most hardened or prejudiced, an involuntary interest for the Moor. Female eyes dropped tears of pity, whilst they were yet fixed in eager and dreadful expectation on the lists. Some generous hearts, though taught by the spirit of the times in which they lived to think Hamet's crime worthy death, breathed, nevertheless, a prayer in secret for his deliverance. If such were the feelings of Christian bosoms for the youth, what were those of the Moors now present; and, in particular, of Hassan and Cassim, so long attached to Hamet; now, alas! forbidden even to approach him?

The Talba, reckless of all else but his own feelings, gave vent to them after the oriental manner of shewing extreme grief. He tore his beard, beat his forehead and his breast, as he exclaimed, "O child of my care—son of the lost Alcanzor! Is this thy fate? Must thou become a prey to the fierce brute of the forest, that will rend thy tender limbs, even as the raging lion tears asunder the young kid? Allah! where is thy judgment?—where thy arm? Wilt thou not strike to save him? And these Christian rulers, have they no hearts?

—no pity? Are they stocks and stones? Are they childless, that they know not a tender pang? Can they tear from the widow's knees the last prop and stay of her age? If prayers could move them, I would kneel and water the earth with my tears; making these eyes as fountains on the parched land, so that I could but awaken pity in their bloodthirsty and hardened hearts. But no; they cannot feel, they will not hear! May curses fall on their heads! May their habitations be desolate; their people childless, even as they would make the wretched Aza! When she shall hear this told her, the spirit of life that is in her will be no more found."

"Peace, Hassan!" cried Cassim, "or your own fate will be as terrible at that now prepared for my dear young master."

"Hamet!" exclaimed the Talba, "thou dear Hamet! so loved, so noble, so young and brave! Must thy green head be laid low, withered as the grass of the field; thy grave dishonoured, thy memory a scoff for wicked tongues?—Take me with thee; Oh, that I could die with thee, that the old and the young should make but one dust! I cannot see thee fall.—Allah, let these tears close my eyes upon thy light; let them be blind as the darkness of thy decree seems now to us! Thy destroying angel is abroad; the black wing of Israfel covers the whole earth; be its shadow over me, rather than I should live to look upon his death!"

In vain did Cassim, who, rough and ungentle as he was, yet felt the old man's affliction, endeavour to soothe Hassan. At length, exhausted with uttering his complaints, he sunk on the ground, imploring Allah to let him die with Hamet in the approaching hour.

In the mean time all had been prepared for the combat. There was a solemnity of feeling, as well as an eagerness of expectation, that appeared impressed on every one around. No longer did the noisy tumult of loud and impatient shouts meet the ear; but deep low sounds, like the undulation of the sea when it rolls heavily but calmly towards the shore, alone broke the silence of an interest so intense that the respiration of so vast a multitude seemed even hushed and subdued for the time.

All was in readiness. Alonso cast a look on Hamet, in which there was something less severe than his usual expression: "Art thou prepared?" said the king.

"Ay, for life or death!" replied Hamet.

"Then God be thy judge, young man," said Alonso, as he raised his arm and gave the signal.

The trumpet gave one clear and hollow blast. It curdled the blood; for it sounded like the knell of death to all but the obdurate of heart. Ere the echoes of the surrounding mountains had finished repeating the awful clarion, the barrier was thrown open; and with one bound the bull burst out. With nostrils smoking, as he uttered fearful bellowings, he stood gazing around, shook his sides, pawed the ground with his broad hoofs, but did not advance to the combat. He was black in colour; and therefore had he been named Nero.

Whilst thus he stood, wild cries arose from the circus. They were strange and mingled; some seemed uttered in joy that the animal shewed little symptoms of being willing for the attack. The more brutal Portuguese, however—those true lovers of the game, who could forget even humanity in their sports—greeted the creature with yells, hoots, and hissings; as it was always deemed an infallible mark of cowardice in the bull if he did not instantly attack his foe.

Hamet was ready to receive him; his wood-knife in his hand—his eye fixed on his enemy. His fine person drawn to its utmost height, every muscle in his slender limbs seemed to swell and to shew its power, as he stood, "like a greyhound on the slip," eager for the hardy encounter. Hassan had struggled with his despair, and had so far overcome it as to be able to rise up and to look upon the horrid contest. The grief of the old man had in some measure wrought on the people who were appointed to watch himself and Cassim, to see they did not interrupt the combat. They drew somewhat aside, and left the Talba and his companion free to utter their remarks less exposed to dangerous listeners; yet remained near enough to rush upon either should they attempt to pass within the arena.

It is needless to say with what intense feelings Hassan witnessed every circumstance. Even Cassim lost all the bitterness of his temper, and seemed alive to the least thing connected with Hamet's danger. The Talba, in the wild eloquence of his speech, vented prayers, hopes, and fears, with a vehemence of utterance that proved how much his soul was bent upon the issue of the combat. "See," he cried, "Allah be praised! his hand is on the mighty brute. The bull stirs not—he is tamed by the power of God!"

"But look!" exclaimed Cassim—"see you not what they are about to do?"

"Holy prophet!" cried Hassan; "the Christian hounds—see, see, if they do not turn out dogs to rouse and irritate

the bull, to hunt him into madness, that yonder boy may be his prey. Look! look! they seize the creature by the throat —they bark, they yell, they run around him, and with their sharp fangs tear his flesh like pincers!"

"He has tossed one of them on his horns," said Cassim. "See, he tramples on another; a third is mangled; a fourth stunned: now the bull drives at the young sharif: Allah be thy shield, noble Hamet!"

The bull, that had been thus irritated by having the dogs turned out upon him—a usual practice whenever the animal shewed any delay in the attack—now sufficiently convinced all the spectators that such delay was not from want of spirit. With an aspect full of savage fury, he lashed his sides with his broad tail, bellowed, tore up the ground with hoof and horns, and darted forward towards Hamet. The youth, by leaping with an agility alone to be compared to the nimble-footed chamois as it springs from rock to rock, endeavoured, but in vain, to avoid the continued pursuit of the bull—his eye ever watchful for the moment of attack.

No such moment occurred; and it seemed evident that his life would terminate with the time in which he should become spent and breathless from the violent exertions he made to preserve it. Hassan saw this. He clasped his hands together in agony—he looked up to heaven—he uttered fearful cries that mingled even with his prayers.

"He will die! he will die!" exclaimed Hassan. "Oh, for an angel's wing to waft him hence in safety! Mortal aid is there none to save him.—But see, prophet of Mecca! what a daring act! He has seized the terrible animal by the horns; he suffers himself to be dragged round the arena. Now he hangs by one hand: he stabs him in the throat; the blood spouts like a fount of waters, but the brute still lives.—Look! Hamet falls from his hold—God save thee!—He is up again! he is on his feet!—O Allah, how I thank thee!—He flies! he flies!—but look! the brute is mad with fury—gored with wounds. See how he tears up the sand. He follows—he follows. How will Hamet escape? He has driven the youth close to the barrier; there is no escape—no hope—he must fall!"

"He falls not, he falls not!" exclaimed Cassim. "O noble Hamet!"

At this instant a loud, continued, and deafening shout of applause shook the arena; for Hamet, bold, active, quick of eye and vigorous of limb, with one bound, at the very instant

the bull was about to toss him on his horns, sprang on the animal's back, and leapt over him. He ran forward. Nero had already received more than one stab from the knife. None of them, however, reached any mortal part; still he bled fast, and there was hope, could Hamet but keep him at bay till the creature was somewhat spent by loss of blood, he might even yet dispatch him. So great was the interest excited in the breasts of the spectators, that many called out to him to make for the extremity of the arena, under the king's pavilion, as being farthest removed from his enemy.

The bull now stood in the centre at bay. Hamet endeavoured to profit by the friendly exhortation of those who were interested in his fate; and Hassan, as eager in catching at the least sign of hope, as he had before been ready to despair, exulted in this, however faint it might be. "He may be saved! he may yet live!" cried the Talba; "the hope of the widow shall not perish. O Allah, God of mercy! be with him now, and he is saved. Do thou stay yonder brute in his wild rage, as thou dost the raging of the mighty tempest, which, at thy word, becomes as hushed as an infant's slumber. Do this, Father of mercy, and he may yet live. But, ah! I dare not look—the bull pursues him again. Surely he will fall —he will perish."

The bull had, indeed, turned again to the pursuit, and that with so much fierceness, the last efforts of his rage, that the sight of it impressed horror. His blood streamed from his flanks; he bounded, rather than ran, forward with dreadful bellowings. He shook his neck and sides, tossed the sand in his career, whilst volumes of smoke arose from his mouth and nostrils. Hamet, as a final effort, determined to spring upon him; and, for that purpose, when within a few yards of the bull, turned to confront him. His foot slipped, he fell, and the knife dropped from his hand. All hope fled; for at this instant he stood close to the barrier, which cut off all retreat, and the wild bull was making towards him, with head bent, to gore him to death with his horns.

A cry of horror arose from the arena. Hamet sprang up. There was no escape. Ines de Castro sat immediately above the very spot where the youthful Moor was in so much danger. Quick in feeling and in thought, she tore from her shoulders the crimson mantle in which she was wrapt, and threw it into the arena with so true a hand, that Hamet caught it, cast it over the bull's head as he prepared to gore him, and, ere the beast could disentangle himself from the blind thus thrown

over him, Hamet recovered his knife, that lay close at his feet, and struck it into the spine of Nero.

His mighty enemy fell, a convulsed corpse, before his view. Hamet, overcome by the tumult of his feelings, dropped on his knees, clasped his hands together, looked up to heaven, but could not speak. Tears burst from his eyes, and in some measure relieved his overburthened spirit, whilst a thousand and a thousand shouts rent the air in joy and gladness, and thankfulness, for his deliverance.

CHAPTER XII.

Hermione.—There's some ill planet reigns:
I must be patient, till the heavens look
With an aspect more favourable.
—— Beseech you all, my lords,
With thoughts so qualified as your charities
Shall best instruct you; measure me—and so
The king's will be performed.

SHAKSPEARE.

When the tumult of sudden joy, occasioned by the deliverance of Hamet, had in some measure subsided, the malignity of Arias Coello, which, like a snake in the grass, though hidden, was ever ready for mischief, vented itself in a whisper, speedily conveyed to the king, "that this could not be considered the judgment of heaven, as the casting down the mantle by Ines de Castro had been the sole cause of saving Hamet from death. It was contrary to the laws of such a combat, an interference of human means."

The king heard this suggestion of the adversary just as Hamet approached the foot of the pavilion. As he advanced he bowed lowly to Ines de Castro, his lips moved, but he did not speak. His tongue seemed to deny him utterance to express his thanks; but there was that in his looks which spoke gratitude, an enthusiasm of feeling too deep for words, too delicate to vent itself in the presence of a multitude. Hamet soon stood before Alonso.

"Young man," said the king, as he addressed him with a coldness and gravity little calculated to inspire confidence; "though we may hardly deem the preservation of your life the judgment of heaven, as you owe it to the generous and prompt aid extended towards you by a lady of our court, yet the gallant spirit, the admirable skill, you have this day shewn in the arena, makes us rejoice in it. We admit you the victor. You are free—safe in life and limb."

Hamet bowed respectfully.

"What thanks do you render us, boy," continued Alonso, "that we allow the combat as ended in your favour? Did we rigidly enforce the laws, we might annul your claim to victory. What thanks then do you give to us?"

"My thanks are first due to Allah," replied Hamet; "next

to yonder lady; and last to you, king Alonso. To Allah they are due, since, to execute his will, to bear his mandate, the wing of the sparrow is as swift as that of the eagle; even so, by his guardian care, has this mantle of silk been to me as strong as a buckler of brass against the wild and horned bull. For yonder lady I feel, but I cannot speak, my thanks: she needs them not; a heart so alive to the impulse of humanity can find no better guerdon than is locked within the treasure-house of its own feelings. To you, king Alonso, I am thankful, that, having the power to do me right, you admit the field as won; since I had died, had it been other; and died I must, had God forsaken me, even in this fearful contest."

"Your thanks to us," said Alonso, "are not well expressed. You are pertinacious in holding to that which we disavow—the judgment of heaven. This was no judgment of heaven, but of human interference. You are young; learn to speak with prudence—with wisdom."

"Surely I do so," replied the ingenuous Hamet, "when I speak with truth. Do not, therefore, deem me thankless. For an offence, in which, to one of my religion, there was no guilt, you put me to a fearful trial: I have done my part to meet it: Allah has preserved me; and for that mercy, in sight of men and angels, I will laud his name."

"Thou art bold for thy years, and for thy people," said the king. "Yet we love gallant deeds, and a noble heart. The frank and the brave are ever the faithful. We will prove thee yet farther; ay, and advance thee, so that thou wilt renounce thy false creed, embrace the holy cross, and take arms in our service."

"King," replied Hamet, "could I do this, I were unworthy thy applause. Thy own words would be my condemnation. I will never desert the God of my fathers. As soon could I change my skin from Afric darkness to the fair hue of yonder Christian lady, as I could change the truth of our holy law, which has denounced the curse of the outcast from paradise on all who, knowing it, forsake it. I will live and die a Moslem. And for taking arms in thy service, king Alonso, could I do this, what were I better than a parricide? since I should draw thy sword—for thine it would be, though in my hand—thy sword, which drank the blood of my father! Surely the very steel would blush for me, and fall from my treacherous hand. No, king; I am in your power, but I will not deceive. You grant me life, and with thanks I accept this present clemency, that I may yet hope one day to meet

him, by whose command my father met his death, in honourable battle."

"You talk bravely," said Alonso, with an air of scorn, though he secretly envied the great spirit of the Moor.

"I will endeavour to act bravely," replied Hamet.

"You are powerless, and little better than a slave," said the king.

"I am the son of a prince," cried Hamet; "of a betrayed, a murdered prince; and know me for the enemy of him who slew that father."

"Enough!" said the king; "we will hear no more; as did we longer suffer thee thus to defy us in the face of our whole court, we should be forced to deal with thee after a manner we were loth to do. Yet these open threats, these expressions of disloyalty, thy late offence—from the peril of which we still hold thee not delivered by other than human means—all demand some chastisement should be thine. In consideration of thy youth, thy birth, and daring spirit, we will temper our sentence with mercy:—Thou art banished. Within three days depart our kingdom; and if, after that space of time, thou art found in Portugal, death be thy doom! Away with him—we will hear no more."

Hamet was driven from the arena, as a smile of malignant joy passed over the dark features of Coello, who rejoiced at the disgrace of his youthful enemy. Hassan and Cassim, who stood at the opposite extremity of the lists, ready to join Hamet the moment he should retire from the presence of the king, of course had not yet learnt the sentence that tyrant had just passed upon the sharif. They now quitted the lists in company with the object of their late anxiety—the Talba, though overwhelmed with joy for his safety, yet wondering at Hamet's disordered looks and silence; for he did not utter a word, having resolved to reach his own ruined home before he communicated to his faithful followers, in the presence of his mother, the cruel banishment so hastily pronounced against him: nor did he in these moments reflect he had helped to bring it on himself by his impassioned and imprudent speech.

We shall not detail the remaining sports of the day. So deep had been the interest excited by the combat of Hamet with the bull, that, after it was over, and the multitude were left to witness less important achievements, their feelings, already wound up to so high a pitch, could not easily be brought down to the standard of an ordinary interest. And though the king did not break up the field till the usual hour,

yet there was an evident impatience for its conclusion; so that, ere the court retired, a considerable portion of the populace had returned homeward.

Another scene was now to take place. It was the royal custom, on the day of St. Francis, that the king, after the sports of the morning were concluded, should sit in the hall of his palace, surrounded by the chief nobles and ladies of the court, to receive all appeals from private persons who had any injuries to complain of, that he might redress them either by his influence or his own absolute authority. This custom was originally designed as a check on the tyranny of the nobles, who often abused the overgrown power placed in their hands by the feudal system of government. In some instances, however, it had been abused even by the kings themselves; since favourites had more than once made these appeals to the royal authority, for the purpose of enforcing claims that would have been more fairly determined by the laws.

Alonso the Brave, according to this ancient custom (borrowed, perhaps, from that of the good St. Louis, who used to sit under a tree in the woods of Vincennes to receive the complaints of his people), was now seated in the hall of audience under a canopy of state. The diadem was on his brows, the sceptre in his hand, and a gorgeous robe upon his shoulders. On a table, which stood before him, covered with cloth of gold, was seen a crucifix and the book of the four Evangelists splendidly illuminated. Near him sat the counsellors of state, the chief nobles and knights, foreign as well as native. The queen and the princess, with the ladies of their train, were also seated, but in an opposite direction of the hall. At the very end of it stood such of the populace as had gained admission to witness the ceremony; and there likewise were stationed all such persons as might have any appeals to make on the royal justice of the king.

Soon after Alonso had taken his seat, a herald, bearing on his coat the arms of Portugal, stepped forward, and with a loud voice proclaimed that all who would address their complaints to the throne, if against any subject native born, or living under the dominion of Portugal, should now humbly but fearlessly advance, as Alonso the king sat there, in his royal clemency and wisdom, to hear and to decide.

The herald ceased speaking, and looked towards the lower end of the hall. There was a short pause—no one spoke. At length a cavalier, dressed in black velvet, with a large cloak and hood that completely concealed his person from observa-

tion, stepped forward, bowed to the king, though he remained at a considerable distance from him, and said in a distinct firm voice, "I would appeal to the justice of the great Alonso!"

"Advance," said the herald; "the king admits thy appeal."

The cavalier immediately obeyed. He stopped within a few paces of the throne, repeated his obeisance, but did not remove his hood.

"Who art thou?" said Alonso. "Why standest thou before us shrouded like a hooded monk? Doff thy hood: we dispense not our justice, as priests do absolution to an unknown penitent, through the lattice of a confessional. Art thou deaf as well as blind? Uncover thy head, and shew thyself, that we may see what image is stamped on thy face, and if it be that of an honest man."

"First give me assurance of safety," replied the cavalier, "that I may go hence as I came, without let or hindrance. Give me thy royal word for this, and I will uncover."

"Take it," said the king; "so that thou prove no traitor, thou art free to depart in safety, even though, as I suspect, thou shouldst be one whose former life has exposed him to our censure. Now raise thy hood."

"The king commands, and I obey," replied Don Diego, as he slowly removed his hood—a part of dress as commonly worn by the laity at that period as a hat in the present day. "Dost thou remember, Sire, the features of a banished man?"

"Ha!" exclaimed Alonso, who probably affected a surprise he did not feel; for he could play the hypocrite, if he chose to do so, in matters of policy, as well as any less warlike prince. "Thou art Don Diego Lopez Pacheco, banished for having drawn our own blood in the veins of our son, the heir to the crown. How darest thou venture thus to brave a sentence of banishment passed on thee, that should terminate but with thy life? Dost thou not fear our indignation?"

"Far less do I fear the wrath of Alonso, than I hope justice from his honour, and mercy from his noble mind," replied Diego. "The king has given me a present assurance of safety, and on my knee I would solicit a recall from banishment. This denied me, I will not make my appeal, but depart hence as I came."

The wily Diego, by such a declaration, secured at once his repeal from banishment; for well did he know that Alonso, forewarned of his purpose by the subtlety of Gonsalez, was above all things desirous that he should enforce the appeal he was about to make. "We have this day," said the king, "banished

an infidel and a rebellious spirit, who bid defiance to us in our very teeth. A Christian solicits pardon, and we may not deny him, grievous though his offence hath been to our own blood. Learn to govern thy hot and quarrelsome humour, that made thee draw on a prince, and thou art pardoned. We the more freely grant this, as we will hope the summers that have passed over thy head in exile have been to thee as harvests bearing the fruits of wisdom. Rise, Don Diego, no longer a banished man."

Ines de Castro, who was present, and witnessed this extraordinary scene, felt greatly distressed. She recollected her recent interview with Don Diego, with her father, and her husband. A confused apprehension that something more than common must occasion this sudden re-appearance of Diego, and the pardon as suddenly given by the king (for Alonso was not easily moved to recall any one from banishment, unless his own interests were concerned), struck her quick apprehension as involving measures in some respect connected with herself. She listened with intense feeling; and, as she stole a timid glance at Diego and then at the king, she thought she read in the countenance of the former a look of triumph little suited to one who comes to make an appeal, as yet held in a doubtful balance. In the haughty countenance of Alonso, difficult to be read by an indifferent eye, but not so by the penetrating glance of one who feared what it might disclose, she fancied she could trace something of that sinister expression which reminded her of Alonso at the moment he named her as sponsor to his grandson prince Ferdinand, that he might separate her, under the pretext of doing her honour, from the hopes of Don Pedro. Ines sickened with apprehension as these fears crossed her mind; and, trembling with anxiety, she awaited the result of a scene of so extraordinary a description.

"Your appeal!" said the king, addressing Don Diego. "Are you prepared? Bid our chaplain advance and administer the oath."

A jovial-looking priest, dressed in white robes, with a black scapula, now came forward, and bade Don Diego place his hand on the book of the four Evangelists. The churchman raised the crucifix; and ere he presented it to the lips of the cavalier, addressed him in these words: "You, Don Diego Lopez Pacheco, born in Portugal, lately banished these realms, and now restored by the mercy of God and the king, shall swear, by the holy Evangelists, on whose Gospels you

have placed your hand—by the Blessed Virgin, the Mother of God,—by the blessed St. Francis, whose day this is,—and by all saints and angels you shall swear, that what you are about to declare is truth; that what you are about to claim is established in truth; that of no malice, nor of any evil intent, nor from any wicked purpose, nor by aid of witchcraft, sorcery, spell, charm, nor any other unlawful arts, you have brought about this claim; and you shall further swear, that you will maintain your cause with the danger of your body, in ordeal, or in arms, if such be the king's pleasure; and that you will abide by the decree of Alonso the Brave, sovereign of Portugal, whether he shall allow or shall annul your appeal. To this you swear. Kiss the cross. And may God give you grace to the keeping of your oath!"

These preliminary forms administered (for they appeared but forms, as, by the rapid manner in which the priest hurried over them, and the abstracted look of Don Diego, neither seemed to give sufficient attention to comprehend their import), the king bade the appellant proceed. Don Diego paused a moment; and then, in a voice, with a manner, that shewed he was more self-possessed than whilst taking the oaths, he thus addressed Alonso: "My appeal, noble king, would not have been made in this presence, nor to you, save that it is by the means of your grace alone I can hope for justice. Dare I proceed? For what I have to say will, I fear, much affect one near to your royal person."

"Proceed," replied the king: "though it should touch our queen, our son, or even ourself, we may not on this day deny you. Speak freely, and fear nothing."

"In my youth," continued Don Diego, "by the sanction of her father, and of her own consent, I was affianced to a lady, noble in blood, beauteous in person. The contract was drawn. All was ratified between us, except the last vows at the altar that give God's sanction, and constitute honourable marriage. Before these were accomplished, the father and the lady fled the kingdom of Castile. They were driven thence by the king, whom this ancient noble had offended by asserting and maintaining the liberties of the people. Hither they fled, and became subjects to Portugal; under the shelter of whose king and whose laws they found refuge. I followed, to claim my betrothed bride. But, alas! dazzled by the splendour of a princely lover—so, at least, was it rumoured by the world—the lady became cold to me, and her father no longer enjoined her obedience. What followed is known to thee, king Alonso.

I acted rashly; I became, in requital, a banished man. But nothing changed by time, and trusting to thy clemency, I am here to assert my claim once more upon the lady; to demand the king's authority do do me right. This is my claim. To its truth am I sworn; and I will maintain my right in any field of arms, if such be thy decree."

"Have you the contract?" said the king. "Name the lady."

"There is the contract," replied Diego, as he threw a written parchment on the table; "the lady is Donna Ines de Castro."

A murmur arose in the hall; for though many present knew Don Diego, and that he had been banished for drawing his sword on Don Pedro, some years since, yet the cause of that quarrel had never been made public. Indeed, the prince had studiously concealed it; so that Alonso himself had not suspected that the attentions of his son to Donna Ines, on the death of Constantia, had excited jealousy in Diego, which ended in the affair that was afterwards the cause of his disgrace.

Every eye was now turned on the unfortunate Donna Ines, who, pale, motionless, and overcome with terror, appeared ready to sink on the earth. Alonso took the contract, examined it carefully, and turning to that part of the assembly where the elders and counsellors of state were seated, he said, "Don Manuel de Castro, come hither; know you this instrument? Is this your hand and seal? Do you admit it yours?"

"The hand of Manuel de Castro, Sire," replied the Castilian, as he took the paper, "was never yet affixed to that which he need blush to own. His seal bears the impress of an ancient house, that was never stamped with dishonour. I admit the contract as valid."

"Why, then, was it broken?" inquired Alonso.

"By necessity, not by choice," replied Don Manuel. "I fled from Castile to save my life; to preserve my children, I bore them with me as the companions of my flight. I had not the power to bestow Ines on Don Diego."

"But Don Diego followed you hither," said the king; "though I knew not that he came to claim this lady. Why, then, was this engagement not fulfilled? He came, I remember, to our court, a gentleman fallen in his fortunes. This last circumstance, perhaps, may account for the loss of his betrothed."

A flush of indignation overspread the face of Don Manuel at the suspicion thus expressed by the king; since the Casti-

lian was the last man living to whom such an insinuation could with justice be applied. "Sire," said Don Manuel, "you have cruelly assailed me. I have known danger in the worst shapes—in the worst times. My friends I lost; my fortune, my home, I lost; till I was driven to seek foreign service and foreign favour. All have I lost—but my honour never. That was the inheritance of my fathers. It was the portion of my youth, the comfort of my misery, the friend of my exile; and it shall be the crown of my gray hairs. Spare me, then, this insult."

The tone of deep emotion in which Don Manuel uttered these words, the manly pride that glowed in his cheek and shewed itself on his open brow,—all evinced the sincerity of his expressions; and the king said, in a gentler accent, "I believe it: but I have yet to learn the cause that could annul the performance of a contract so solemn as that you now hold in your hand. It is due to your own honour that you should here declare it."

Don Manuel turned his eyes on Ines de Castro; they met hers, as, filled with tears, eloquent in the distress they betrayed, she looked imploringly upon him. Too well did Don Manuel guess the cause of his daughter's misery, though ignorant of her unhappy marriage. Stern and inflexible as he was in his desire that Ines should be no bar to the union of the prince with the Infanta of Aragon, nevertheless the feelings of a father within his breast were strong and tenacious as those of life itself. He shuddered as he thought of the sorrows he must inflict upon her, should he speak the truth. Yet honour, which to the noble mind is like armour of proof, guarded his heart from what he deemed so likely to subdue it—too much regard for his child. He dared not trust himself longer to look upon her. Slowly withdrawing his eyes, he cast them on the ground, as he answered the king—"My daughter would not complete the marriage. She pleaded hard; a father listened, and she prevailed."

"Is it so?" said the king: "then, as a prince, as the common father of all within our rule, must we enforce our authority on the disobedient. Bid the Lady Ines come hither. Go, my Lord Gonsalez; do you marshal her to us."

Alvaro Gonsalez, whose arts acting on the mind of the impassioned and selfish Diego had prepared this hour of trial for Ines, now stepped forward to conduct her to the king. She arose from her seat, and gave her hand to Alvaro. But, unable to support those glances of envy, cusiosity, and malice,

cast upon her from so many quarters, where her beauty and her influence with the prince had rendered her an object of jealous hatred, she dropped her veil over her face, and could scarcely support herself as she stood before the king.

Alonso saw her agitation. To his haughty and vindictive spirit she was an abhorrence; as the thought that a woman, who but a few years since came a fugitive to his court, should now become the only formidable obstacle to his own plan to place a second crown on the head of his son, was not to be endured by a mind so lofty, so ambitious, as Alonso's. No enemy he had yet encountered in battle had he half so much dreaded as this enemy to his deep policy. He hated her the more, as her sex protected her from the only means which, consistent with his character, he could have pursued to chastise her, namely, by sword or lance. He was forced, or rather he fancied himself so, to use unworthy arts to accomplish his purpose. These debased him in his own eyes; and as he secretly felt the sting of such degradation, he laid all the blame of it to the score of Ines, without once reflecting—so great a deceiver is pride and self-love—that he had himself invested his own tyranny and ambition with the sacred authority of law and truth. For the faults of Ines he felt no pity, he made no allowance; he was bent on her destruction. Yet, though such were his feelings, the chivalrous spirit of the times in which he lived compelled him to conceal them; and he now therefore treated her with that degree of outward respect, which the executioner is sometimes seen to observe towards the criminal he is about to dispatch.

"Lady," said Alonso, as Ines advanced, "you are distressed. To us the duty we have this day to perform is painful, yet necessary. It is one of those cares that help to make the lot of kings no easy station: we are here to do judgment. The judge must have no eye but to look on truth, no hand but to hold the balance equal, whilst his heart is in the law."

"Yet, when mercy whispers," said Ines, "surely he may listen! Oh, that her voice might now plead to thee! If that is mute, I have no hope; as I will not gainsay the truth of my father's assertion. He is guiltless; I only am to blame."

"You admit, then," said the king, "that this solemn pledge to him who was to have been your husband was broken by you alone?"

"It was," replied Ines; "yet Don Diego knew the cause; and that for his sake as well as mine——"

"We will entreat you to raise your veil," said the king;

"your accents are soft and low; the gauze somewhat impedes them. Unveil, lady; and, trust me, no knight here present will condemn Don Diego for this day's appeal. Unveil, that all may see how grievous a thing it is that falsehood should dwell with such fair features."

"If grief and shame could mar our outward feature, as they do our inward soul," said Ines, "mine would seem most foul. I speak this, not as it respects my offence, but my condition. It shames me thus to be the butt of all men's eyes; and by the accusation of one who is alike selfish and ungenerous."

"How!" exclaimed Alonso; "would you turn the accuser? But when had woman other than a bitter tongue? We are here to listen to what you would speak in your own defence, not to hear a new charge; and that against him you have wronged, who is now your accuser."

"That very accusation is my best defence," replied Ines. "Base and groveling must be the soul of him, unworthy woman's love, who would win her by the force of law, and not by her own free will. I never loved Don Diego. He knew my mind. I never gave him aught, save that fatal contract, wrung from me by his importunity, and in obedience to a dear father's will. If he has the spirit of a man, and the honour of a gentleman, he dares not deny the truth."

"Still you admit you gave it," said the king. "Oaths, lady,—this sacred contract, as a holy witness between soul and soul,—must not be broken by every breath of a changing fancy, as if they were the light thread of the gossamer that crosses our path. Why did you ever promise?"

"Ay!" cried Ines, "there was my crime. I yielded to please my father. Had I never given consent to that fatal bond, I had never been thus accused. It was false in me thus to belie my own heart. Too well do I now feel that truth is our rock, which but once abandoned, there is no hold to stay us—we fall and perish—a soul born for virtue, soon covered with dishonour. Yet, if you have pity, shew it me. Think what I was when I signed the contract. I was of tender years—a girl, scarce knowing how solemn was its import, how fatal would it be to break it; and yet how far more fatal, how dishonest, its fulfilment, when the heart refused its consent to the act of the hand. Still I will not deny my fault; my hope, the hope of the guilty—is in mercy!"

"This, Donna Ines," said the king, "is not a cause that [illegible]pon our mercy. We are here to enforce the fulfilment

of your broken vows. If Don Diego persists, we must award this contract valid."

"He will not persist," said Ines with spirit; "he is a knight, sworn to be brave in arms and stedfast in honour. Could he, in spite of what has passed, maintain his claim to enslave the free will of an unhappy woman, he were no better than a recreant, whose arms would deserve to be reversed in the lists, and his crest shorn from the casque that covered the brow of a craven. He will not persist."

"He is silent, lady," said Alonso; "and heeds, it may be, your own act more than these railing words, that neither cancel these writings, nor can melt the wax which seals them. We are compelled to do our duty, and must give judgment in his favour."

"Is there no hope?" said Ines. "Will the king be deaf to pity? But," she added in a low and tremulous voice, yet eagerly, "what if I still refuse compliance, even on your decree—what follows?"

"Imprisonment," said the king, "for contempt of this court and of our royal person. Imprisonment without date or term, till the Church shall decide your cause."

"Then I accept bonds," cried Ines de Castro, "as freely as did ever captive liberty. To the Church I make my appeal. I will never wed Don Diego."

Here the venerable Azavedo rose; and with that generous feeling, which ever prompted him to commiserate the distressed, he addressed Ines de Castro in accents that shewed how deeply he was interested in her fate. "Beware, lady," he said; "be not hasty to make this election. You know not the danger to which you stand exposed. Should the patriarch decide in favour of Don Diego, and you still persist in your refusal, you will be condemned for life to the penitential cells in the convent of St. Magdalen. The austerities of those cells are fearful. Deep mystery involves their solitude. No eye has penetrated their depths; and there lives not a creature, who once having entered those dreaded walls, was ever yet known to return to tell their secrets."

Ines shuddered; but no choice was left her. To reveal her marriage was not be thought upon, since she had so repeatedly and solemnly promised Don Pedro, that, under any circumstances, she never would reveal it without his consent. The danger attending such a disclosure, not merely to herself, but to her children, father, and kindred, was too apparent to tempt her, even for a moment, to doubt it. Any sufferings—death

itself—would be more welcome than to break her plighted word, given under such solemn injunctions of secresy, to her adored husband. One faint ray of hope, however, even at this hour of distress, stole upon her mind, and afforded her some comfort. It was impossible that Don Pedro (though now absent with the men-at-arms to subdue his rebel uncle) could long remain ignorant of her distress. Her imprisonment would reach his ears. She doubted not that his affection must make him prompt and eager to save her. Time also would be gained by her confinement. These thoughts passed rapidly through her mind; they reassured her; so that when Azavedo had concluded the warning he gave her, of what might be her fate if she persisted in suffering the affair to be referred to the Church, she maintained a degree of calmness and composure that surprised all who witnessed it, and to whom the motives of her conduct were unknown.

Her youth, her extreme loveliness, the firmness with which she persisted in her denial of Don Diego, and braved the dangers that threatened her, softened every heart, save those interested in her fall. Unfortunately they were by far the greater number; for, as we have already stated, her power and influence, generously, but not at all times prudently, exerted in favour of her countrymen, had given the highest offence to the native Portuguese, whose jealousy made them eager to precipitate her ruin; nothing doubting that the ruin of her father and family would soon follow; as she had been the centre round whose orbit they had revolved. The De Castro race fallen, lucrative posts and offices, with the government of Algarva (all stations heaped on them by the prince), would be once more open for the ambition of statesmen and the intrigues of politicians. The influence of the prince would be shaken with his father by the disgrace of the De Castros. Every one knew that personal merit had much power with Alonso, when left to act by his own judgment. It followed, therefore, that every individual of the court, if merit could obtain office, considered himself as having a fair chance, should these obstacles be removed. It is needless to add how many wished the fall of Ines and her family altogether. We have somewhat enlarged on this point, because, in the sequel, it will be found of import.

After a pause, in which Alonso seemed to expect that Ines would declare her final resolution, he again asked her if she still persisted in refusing to confirm the contract with Don Diego.

"I do persist," said Ines in a firm voice.

Don Manuel, who knew, better than herself, that she had nothing to hope from an appeal to the patriarch but a confirmation of the contract, trembled to think on the horrors of St. Magdalen; for, though its austerities were concealed from the world, yet the number of graves that filled its cemetery told a tale of sufferings certain to end life by no very lingering means. Cold damps stood upon his forehead as he beheld his daughter; a paleness overspread his cheek, and his aged hands shook with emotion. He clasped them together, and fixing a look of unutterable agony upon her, exclaimed in a low voice—"Ines, Ines! think ere you determine. Have you no heart for a father's grief?"

Ines looked up. The distress painted in every feature of the venerable Don Manuel's countenance pierced her very soul. Her firmness of manner, but not her purpose, gave way; and scarcely able to support her agitated frame, she covered her face with her hands, and wept aloud. The king, probably, mistook the cause of her emotion; for he said, with an encouraging voice, "We are not inexorable to pity. Though you have declared your resolution to refer this matter to the Church, we will even yet allow you to revoke it, and forthwith confirm the contract, should such be your change of purpose. Speak, lady, speak."

"I cannot change," said Ines, in a voice half stifled with tears and emotion.

"If such is your resolution," replied the king, "grievous though it be to us, we must consign you to a close imprisonment till the day of the trial of your cause. Proceed to administer the oath of appeal to the Church," continued Alonso, as he looked towards the chaplain. "Lady, think again. When that oath has passed your lips, not even our interference can withhold your cause from a power so sacred."

Ines somewhat recovered her firmness, as she stood mute, ready to perform the solemn ceremony. The chaplain again advanced, and putting the crucifix into her hand, bade her thus repeat after him: "In the name of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Universal Church of Rome, I, Ines de Castro, do most solemnly appeal to the patriarch of this realm of Portugal, now acting under the authority of His Holiness the Pope, that the Church may decide this cause between me and my adversary, Don Diego Lopez Pacheco. And I solemnly swear, in the name of Mary the mother of God, and of all saints and angels, that if, after such decision of the holy

Church, I am found obdurate and disobedient, I will yield body and soul to whatever penances, punishments, or chastisements the high patriarch of these realms shall, in his wisdom and his holy care, think fit to impose on me. And so help me, Holy Virgin, in the hour of my death and judgment, as I will keep this oath."

Ines repeated it in a low and faltering voice; but when she came to that part where she so awfully pledged both body and soul to yield them to whatever cruel inflictions might be passed on her, horror chilled her blood, for she knew the utter impossibility of avoiding the worst severities, should the Church deal hardly by her. Shocked, confounded, and, as she justly thought, betrayed into this snare by the connivance and deep policy of the king, she dropped the crucifix from her hands, and would have sunk on the ground, but that those about her prevented her fall.

Don Manuel saw her condition. With a loud cry he burst from his fellow Counsellors, who would have detained him, and rushing forward, bent over his senseless child, as he wept and wrung his hands in the agony of a father's grief. Don Diego, stung to the quick by the scene of misery, felt his wicked and selfish purpose shaken within his soul. He doubted—he paused—he had even advanced some steps towards the throne to revoke his claim, when Alvaro Gonsalez, who had a deeper stake in the events of this day than Diego suspected, stood, with the watchful eye of a vulture on its prey, observing all that passed. In a moment he was by Diego's side. He siezed him by the arm, and ere he could advance another pace whispered in his ear a few hurried words. What they were, no one else heard; but, like the electric fluid, they seemed in an instant to thrill through every nerve of his irresolute friend. Diego became pale as death; in another moment, however, the flush of anger mantled his face, as he gazed on Ines de Castro with the look of an exulting fiend when he finds a human soul his own. He then retired with Gonsalez to the farthest end of the hall, remote from general observation.

It was during this brief space that, whilst scarcely recovered from the swoon into which she had fallen by the agony of this day's suffering, the miserable Ines was removed, under a strong guard, to the prisons in the Castle of Cintra. Alonso had so much of humanity left, as to give orders that she should be treated with respect and care.

CHAPTER XIII.

Gracious lord,
Stand for your own; unwind your bloody flag;
Look back unto your mighty ancestors.
SHAKSPEARE.

LEAVING for a time the unhappy Ines de Castro, consigned to a prison, there to await the hour that should decide her fate, we must now direct the attention of our reader to events that will be found deeply connected with the sequel of our narrative; and which oblige us to shift the scene of action to a wild sequestered spot in one of those mountainous regions that lie between Cintra and Coimbra—at the date of our story the lurking-place for rebels, Moors, robbers, and all such persons as feared the social habitation of town or city.

The scene was one of those calculated to raise the mind of man to wonder and admiration, as he views the works of that almighty Being, whose noblest temple is found in the stupendous objects of creation, where rock and cloud, precipice and torrent, meet to pay Him homage! The strife of elements amid these mountain summits—their voice of thunder, re-echoed from height and depth—impress with awe the living eye and the living ear, that sees and listens, as they rise and speak the majesty of God in the tempest, that image of His irresistible power.

A wild range of lofty mountains, peak above peak, that at sunrise or sunset displayed tints of glittering gold, purple, or hues crimson as the rose, on every side met the eye. The mountain crests appeared so interminable, that they rose above each other like waves in a tempestuous ocean. A rocky pass, which led into their interior, was deemed of so much consequence, that, during the time the Moors were lords of the country, a strong tower had been erected at the very gorge of the pass, to command the road that lay beneath, through this deep and rugged ravine. The tower was now in ruins, and incapable of defence; but it stood, dark and frowning, like a lofty spirit, which keeps its elevation though deprived of power, and is still unsubdued in the majesty of its original character.

Beyond, in the centre of one of those small levels so frequently found embosomed in mountains, a Moorish castle (for whose outpost the tower at the pass had been erected) still reared its head amid the clouds—still was capable of defence—and was now once more inhabited, after many years of desertion. It overlooked an extensive range of heights and deep hollows that lay around. From its watch-towers might be seen those rocks whose broken and cragged sides displayed rich veins of marble. Forests of pine or oak trees in some parts skirted the declivities; and ceased where the air, too bleak for vegetation, allowed nothing to grow, and left the rocks exposed naked to the elements that beat upon their savage fronts.

A precipice, not far from the level on which the fortress stood (whose site was only accessible by the pass we have mentioned), exhibited a falling stream that seldom failed; but which, after heavy rains, swelled itself into a torrent that poured down into the valley below in the wildest tumult of noise and foam, breaking over or rolling forward fragments of marble or of granite in its course, and boiling at its base like a cauldron. Above the torrent, to facilitate a passage from rock to rock, one of those bridges so common in mountainous countries had been constructed: it consisted of pine trees secured together by strong cordage, so that, should the approach of an enemy render it prudent to remove such a facility, the bridge might be easily destroyed and cast into the gulf below. Beyond, as far as the eye could extend, nothing was seen but a range of mountains, softened by distance into forms and tints of such extreme delicacy and beauty, as to render them half ideal—things seemingly more of fancy than of substance. The light blue line of the Atlantic, that closed the horizon, could scarcely be distinguished from the azure expanse of upper air.

The gateway which gave access to the castle was guarded on each side by a round and lofty tower; whilst, for thickness, these and the walls might be compared to those of the Cyclops. Neither time nor warfare seemed to have shaken their strength. They were pierced with narrow slits and loopholes, which, as if they were the eyes of so vast a body, gave light and intelligence within, or afforded the means to aim a fatal shaft at those who would intrude from without. Above the gateway hung a portcullis of iron bars and sharp spikes, that, like the teeth of a shark, would fall and tear to pieces all who ventured, as an enemy, to pass within the jaws of the fortress.

Through the machicolations also, above, might stones, boiling pitch, or missiles, be sent down upon the heads of a foe; and the ramparts and turrets, though in parts broken or injured, were still, however, capable of affording shelter and defence to any stationed upon them.

This fortress, though it had little to fear from outward attacks, was, like all other places of defence, liable to danger if those within proved false; since a castle, no more than a state, remains impregnable, if once divided in itself. In former times, after the great battle of Santeren, where the Christians overcame the Moors, it had been betrayed by secret treachery to the enemy. All the Moors who then guarded it had been put to the sword; not one was spared to tell the tale of treachery, saving him by whose means it had been effected. In memory of this event, the fortress, even amongst Christians, obtained the fearful name of "The Castle of Death;" and tradition, by that appellation, had handed it down to posterity.

After the Moors were so entirely overthrown in Portugal and elsewhere by Alonso, the Castle of Death was left desolate, as another stronghold, erected by the late king Denis amid these mountains, nearer to Coimbra, was deemed a more desirable place for a garrison. After man had abandoned its walls, the terrors of this ancient fortress became proverbial. It was said to be haunted by the spirits of the murdered; and the mountain wanderer shunned to advance even within the shadow of its dark and lonely towers. It was inhabited but by birds of prey; though now and then it afforded a shelter to those bold marauders who cared not for the horrors with which superstition had peopled its walls—who, fearing neither God nor devil, would not have scrupled to act again those deeds of outrage or of murder, which had made it not only deserted but accursed. Lately, however, circumstances, to which we shall soon refer, had once more caused it to become the regular habitation of man.

Towards nightfall, those who now held possession of this fortress failed not to place a sentinel on the ramparts above the gateway. One evening (soon after the festival of St. Francis), whilst he paced his round, he observed in the ravine that led towards the castle, the light of a torch, as it slowly passed along, now flashing on the sides of the broad rock, and anon leaving them to darkness, as the torch-bearer ascended the path. By the red glare of the light it was easily discovered that more than one person bore him company. The sentinel for some minutes watched the steps of these

intruders into the solitude of the mountains, without moving from his post; thinking they might be but a party of hunters, or probably of outlaws or banditti—frequent wanderers amid these wilds. But when he observed them pass below the ruined watch-tower, and begin to ascend the path which led towards the level where the castle stood, he hastened to give the alarm to those within. No sooner had he given the alarm, than several armed men took their stations on the ramparts, and a person above the common order placed himself at a loophole ready to parley with any one who might approach from without.

The torch gradually threw its rays higher and higher up the rock, till those for whose guidance it dispelled the darkness of the way had cleared the pass, and were advancing towards the level. The foremost now made for the castle, leaving his companions somewhat in the rear. He raised the torch, and seemed, for a moment, as if engaged in examining the strength of the gateway. The voice from the loophole demanded who he was, and what he wanted at that hour of the night? The light which shewed the gateway to him who carried it, also shewed the torch-bearer to the person who thus parleyed from within; and he beheld a Moor, somewhat advanced in life, but of a noble and warlike aspect.

The Moor made no immediate reply to the question; but, feeling within his bosom, drew out his tablets, and desired they might be forthwith carried to him who was then the commander of the fortress. To do this, the man who had parleyed from within put forth the point of a cimetar, on which he directed the Moor to suspend them. He did so; and they were carefully drawn back through the loophole. Ere the time which was necessarily occupied in communicating with the commander had elapsed, the companions of the Moor had joined him; and they now stood before the gateway in profound silence, expecting the result of whatever intelligence had been so singularly conveyed within.

They were not long held in suspense; for soon the heavy fall of bars, with the creaking of bolt and hinge, announced the opening of the wicket, a small door cut in the great gates. "Enter, and quickly!" said the same voice which had spoken through the loophole.

"Ay," cried the Moor, "within the Shadow of Death, whose dart was once so fatal to our people in these dreary walls."

His companions followed in silence; the door was instantly closed and secured. The man who had opened to them, now

conducted the strangers into a guard-room of one of the flanking towers. There he left them, whilst he again went forward to receive farther instructions from his superiors. The guard-room, with its rude bare walls of stone, black from time and smoke, presented a gloomy aspect, as it was feebly lighted by a solitary lamp that hung from the roof. It shewed but imperfectly, to two or three men-at-arms who were present, the persons of the strangers. They were all Moors; amongst them was a woman completely shrouded in the folds of a long veil. There was dejection in the manner of them all; and the only one—he who had acted as a guide to the rest—whose voice had been heard, now stood as silent as his companions, with his arms folded across the breast, and a countenance in which a peculiar expression was imprinted in strong characters. It was neither that of anger nor of despondency, but had in it something that spoke the high resolution of a bold and firm mind suffering under the hard hand of calamity.

After an interval, footsteps approached; they were echoed along the vaulted passages of this dreary fortress. The messenger returned, and bade the Moor, with his companions, follow him without delay. Here we must step before them, and say something of those into whose presence the strangers were to be conducted.

Within a large vaulted chamber, the walls of which were as naked and as stern as the guard-room, were seated three persons. Though there was more light in this than in the other apartment, it served but to render more conspicuous the desolation of the place. The long pointed windows, placed high in the walls, that looked upon an interior court, were in many parts shattered, and admitted the night breeze that whistled through them as it blew cold and bleak in these high regions. Fragments of stained glass hung loose from the broken lead-work, which but slightly supported them. There was not more furniture in the chamber than might be necessary for the common purposes of life; it was of the rudest kind. The fireplace, formed of slabs of marble hewn from the neighbouring rocks, looked as heavy and as dark as a sepulchre. The logs and dry branches of the pine-tree, that burnt upon the hearth, sent columns of smoke into the room as the eddies of the wind blew it back through the huge tunnel by which it was intended to escape. Some suits of armour, rich and highly polished, hung on the naked walls, as if to figure the splendour and the misery of the warrior;

gallant in his brilliant panoply, but how often bare and rugged in his fortunes!

A large lamp, with more than one burner, hung by a chain from the roof, and threw its light full upon a cavalier of a noble and benign aspect. His features were high and regular: there was an open expression about his brow, and in his large black eye full of fire and intelligence, that shewed him, at the first glance, to be near in blood to the old king Denis, who was called the Liberal, and the Father of his country. Such was this cavalier, Don Sanchez, his illegitimate son; the hated, persecuted brother of Alonso, against whom, driven to desperation by repeated acts of tyranny, he was now in arms, and lay concealed, with a chosen band of followers, within the mountain fortress of Death.

The two companions of his counsels were ill suited to his natural character, and, perhaps, to the place. One of them was a turbulent and ambitious man, Don John of Almeria. His order was apparent by the silver cross upon his breast. The other was no less a person than the prior of Evora, the somewhat jovial priest, yet the artful and sworn enemy of Alonso, who had so often disturbed the peace of his reign by exciting bitter feuds, in consequence of his claims for the Church in opposition to the interests and arbitrary will of the king.

After Don Sanchez had received the tablets, he read the few words written upon them with much attention; and as these were in Arabic, a language with which he was well acquainted, he interpreted their contents to the prior. Don John understood the Moorish Arabic; he needed no translator. Don Sanchez then hastily directed the attendant, who had parleyed from the gate, to admit those without, and conduct them to the guard-room, there to await his farther orders.

The contents of the tablets were brief, but expressive of much matter. The subject of them became a theme of discussion—probably of some objection in the mind of Don Sanchez, for he now said to the prior, "They are infidels, enemies to the true faith; and though I would do myself right, yet, as I am a Christian man, I would not receive such aid as this, did I think it would injure the common cause of our holy religion.—I doubt, prior: you are a churchman; and I look to you, to clear, or to confirm, my objection."

"I have not doubted," replied the prior of Evora, as he raised himself with an air of spiritual pride, and looked at Don Sanchez. "Our brother here sees the proferred aid in

the same way that I do; accept it, then, and without a murmur. Heaven has sent it; for vile things heaven can sanctify to noble purposes. Trust me, you will need the aid you would so readily reject."

"Think," said Don John of Almeria, "of the injuries with which your brother, the king, has overwhelmed you — seized your lands, possessed himself of your lawful inheritance, proclaimed you traitor ere you drew a sword to do yourself right, and now has set a price upon your head. All aid should be welcome—Turk, Moor, or Christian. And remember, we owe no fellowship to the things that we use — our dogs hunt down our game; but they are the servants, not the equals of man."

"Yet it is not as dogs," said Don Sanchez, "that I would use those who help me to obtain my rights from my cruel brother. I would reward all who serve me as faithful allies."

"I know it," replied the knight: "you have a princely mind; the son of the old king Denis in spirit as well as in blood, and far better able to fill his throne than the tyrant Alonso."

"I tell you once again," said Don Sanchez, "I do not aim at the throne. I am in arms to obtain my just rights, torn from me by oppression. I am driven to this pass by dire necessity, not from choice. My life is at this hour the object of a rich prize, as a price is set upon my head by Alonso.— I aim not to wear the crown."

"You aim not to wear it," said the prior of Evora, "but if heaven binds it on your brows, you would not reject it. You ought not to reject it; for some high designs, as yet hidden in futurity, you, like the son of Jesse, may be chosen to slay this Goliah of the land, and to sit upon the throne of Israel."

"What mean you?" said Don Sanchez. "Think you, priest, that I would flesh my sword in a brother's blood?"

"I think not so, and I say not so," answered the prior; "though that brother now sets a price upon your head; and life for life is God's own commandment. There is warrant for it in Holy Writ."

"But I am alive, unscathed in limb, though shorn in fortune," said Don Sanchez.

"Ay," cried Don John; "and how long would you be alive, could Alonso, could Don Pedro, even but guess the place of your retreat? They would rend the iron ribs of this old fortress to lay hold of you."

"But what, think you, could render this fortress invulnerable," continued the prior, "had not the holy mother of God

sent to your aid a spiritual comforter to bless and to strengthen these walls; one who, in her name, like Moses, shall cause the battle to rage and to prosper, as he lifts up his hand in prayer for your success? There is a whole convent of monks, who, at my bidding, daily perform the sacrifice of the mass for your deliverance; whilst I have ventured all to join you."

"The monks shall not be forgotten, if I succeed," said Don Sanchez: "I have promised, and I will fulfil my word, to endow your monastery with certain lands of Codecyra, whilst thou art abbot of its house."

"The labourer is worthy of his hire," said the churchman with a proud air of humility. "I have joined your cause, Don Sanchez, from no worldly motive, but for that which bids us, in Christian charity, to take part with the oppressed. Like the prophet of God, I have stood before thy brother, the king, and have denounced him as Elisha did Ahab. But to these Moors: I have satisfied your scruples: your friend Don Gonsalez, who, for your sake, has long held secret communication with a leader amongst these infidels—he has pointed to them the place of your concealment, and has sent one to your aid, who, by the words in the tablets, is, I doubt not, powerful. Receive him—manage him wisely—and question not, but at his command, every Moor in Portugal will rise and flock to your banner."

"And thus," said Don Sanchez, "you would counsel me to bring back the old pest upon the land again, when children could not sleep in their beds for the cry of the Moor!"

"Yet, remember, "said the prior, "the contest you wage is for life or death; that is a thing should overcome some scruples."

"It is true," said Don Sanchez, "Alonso has driven me into these acts. I had a heart that would have opened itself to my brother, true in affection, faithful in loyalty: but even from boyhood he has been my deadly foe. In our father's lifetime, but for the generous care of good king Denis, he would have been my murderer."

"You remember it at a happy moment," said Don John; "nor have I forgotten that Alonso caused to be presented to you a poisoned bowl of wine."

"I was forewarned of the danger," replied Don Sanchez; "I dashed the bowl from my lips, and the memory of it from my mind. Had Alonso, in after times, been to me as a brother, had nature but once stirred in his heart one feeling of affection, I had never called up the remembrance of it now. Yet he still persecutes me, and will do so to the death."

"Wherefore, then, doubt?—wherefore, then, pause?" said the prior. "Accept all such aids as God shall send thee, my son; and be thankful for them. By the rood! if our Lady of Pity would send thee legions of wild bulls, wolves, or bears, to do battle in thy cause, I would counsel thee to take them, and to shew thy sense of the mercy in bounties to the Church. Call in these dog Moors, I say; wherefore pause?"

Don Sanchez no longer did so; but the scene which followed demands another chapter.

CHAPTER XIV.

Contention, like a horse
Full of high feeding, madly hath broke loose,
And bears down all before him.

SHAKSPEARE.

As the Moor, who, doubtless, our readers will have recognised for Hassan, entered the chamber, attended by his companions, Don Sanchez saluted him with courtesy, but still with an air of coldness—a salutation which, in these dark times, failed not to mark how abhorrent to a genuine follower of the cross was the presence of a Moslem. The Christian leader looked as if he expected the Moor, who had sent him the tablets, to open the discourse; but ere any one could speak, the female advanced, threw back her veil, and crossing her arms upon her breast, knelt before Don Sanchez, though he would have prevented such humiliation. There was a grace and dignity in her demeanour which surprised every one present, not excepting the prior himself, who whispered Don John, that, like the pots in Jeremiah, when given over to abomination, the devil often possessed himself of those most comely in outward favour.

Aza Anzurez looked up on Don Sanchez with a countenance expressive of those deep and high-minded feelings, that rendered her an object of interest even with the enemies of her faith, whilst, in the figurative manner of her people, she addressed him at once as a suppliant and a mother.

"Brave cavalier!" she said, "you, who are terrible in war as Omar of the Syrian desert, and, as he was, gracious and full of mercy to the wretched—hear a woman's prayer! It is to you I come in the hour of sorrow; it is to you I flee, with me and mine, as to a rock of shelter—a tower of defence. Look upon this boy! Come hither, Hamet. He is noble as thyself in mind, and like thee, royally born. The blood of a hundred kings flows in his veins. Aza, the widow of Alcanzor, kneels before thee. Her son has been treated with cruelty; driven into the arena, for the offence of a word spoken in haste, to match his youthful strength against the wild and fierce bull of

Estremadura. He encountered the brutal enemy: he fought, and was the victor. Yet not even this could satisfy the tyranny of thy brother, the king. For, whilst yet panting and breathless from the savage contest, Alonso doomed him to banishment, and bade him within three days seek a home in the wilderness of this wide world, where he has no place of rest for the sole of his foot; or, if he stayed, to die the death. The boy feared to pain a mother's breast by speaking of these things; but when he girt about him his father's sword, bound his sandals on his feet, and would depart his home, the tear that dropped on my cheek as he gave the parting kiss told me he would never more return; for the son of Alcanzor could weep for no less an evil. I saw there was some fearful cause for this abrupt departure: I wrung from him the truth, and bore him company in his banishment. For his sake I left my home; but that is a small thing. Aza's soul is in her son; and if he rest his head beneath the palm, the fig tree, or the vine, or if snow-wreaths of the mountain make his orphan pillow, there is the home of Aza."

Don Sanchez was a man of a generous heart; sorrow never appealed to him in vain; and, whilst listening to the tale of the widow's grief, he forgot the prejudices then deemed essentials of Christianity, in order to do an act truly Christian. He raised Aza from the ground, with that air of knightly courtesy he would have extended towards a Christian princess who called upon his chivalry for assistance in the hour of distress;—he gave her a generous assurance of such protection as his preparations for a life of toil and warfare would admit.

"Noble Don Sanchez," said Aza, "I came not to burthen you with my sorrows: I would do you service, and requite your good deeds with a grateful heart. Look on my banished son! He is young; has limbs fit for war, as well as for the chase. He would avenge his father's injuries and his own. He has an arm to wield a sword, and a soul that, like the war-horse of Arabia, pants to rush into the battle. Take him, Don Sanchez; he is thine: a mother devotes her only son to thy cause."

While Aza spoke, she led Hamet to the feet of the cavalier, and looked exultingly upon him, as Don Sanchez, struck with the ingenuous air, and the fine person of the young sharif, received him with marked respect. Mutual assurances of good-will and zeal in action were given and received. Whilst this passed, the Talba stood looking on with fixed attention,

nor did he venture to speak till Aza and Hamet had concluded their discourse.

Don Sanchez then turned to Hassan. "You are," he said, "I conclude, from your age and appearance, the Moor from whom I received these tablets."

Hassan bowed assent.

"The intelligence they contain is of import," continued Don Sanchez; "yet I would learn more. It was Don Alvaro Gonsalez, as appears from what you have written, who advised you of my concealment, and to bring hither this banished youth with his family."

"It was," replied Hassan; "but my mission ends not so. I have that in my power to serve you, noble son of king Denis, that Don Gonsalez yet knows not of. My services rest on your will to receive them; as, on one condition, will I alone give them. It is written in thy fortunes that thou shalt live and prosper, if, ere the ninth moon from this time, thou art reconciled to thy brother. There is but one way for thee to be reconciled to him, and that must be sought by the power of thy sword and the swords of thy friends."

"Holy Mary!" exclaimed the prior, "what a contradiction is this! What! have we here a juggling dealer in the arts of magic? I tell thee, Moor, the king will live and die the enemy of his brother."

"Peace!" said the Talba; "I talk not to a monk, who gives more credit to the molten image he rears at his altars than to the wandering planets of heaven, that have each a voice to declare the laws of their Maker."

"Moor," said Don Sanchez, "beware thy words. Blaspheme not the holy altars of the most holy saints. Those images are but the visible signs of the great powers and spirits worshiped in our church."

"Look abroad," said the Talba, as he raised his eyes to the window, through whose broken glass the rising moon and stars could now be seen. "What are those glorious hosts, and that high moon, but visible signs of the eternal God? It is in these I read his power and his laws. Their book lies as open to me as to the shepherds of Chaldea. I would read it for your advantage, would you but hear me; or, will you be like the foolish people who would not hearken to the prophet Hud, when he reproved them for idolatry? Allah sent upon them a hot and suffocating wind, which blew for seven days and seven nights, and did the work of death. And the vultures and the carrion birds were gathered in one place. Wilt thou hear me?"

"Speak," said Don Sanchez; "but, though thou art a Moslem, speak reverently of holy things."

"I were no Moslem did I other," replied the Talba. "I say again, that though to our people the cruel Alonso has ever been a bitter foe, yet, if thy arms prevail in this enterprise, ere the ninth moon be waned he shall be reconciled to thee. If the dark sons of Ismael help thee to thy success, wilt thou promise to perform what I shall ask?"

"Not till I know thy demand," said Don Sanchez. "My word once passed, it is a bond not to be broken, though at my own hindrance. Such, Moor, are a Christian knight's thoughts of honour. Yet, if you doubt my will, or the means by which I hope to reward such service as you may have the power to do me, you know me not. Learn that I lay claim to lands and possessions wrested from me by my brother, which, when restored, will give me sufficient to cover you with gold and silver like an Eastern emir."

"You know me not, Don Sanchez," replied the Talba, with emphasis. "I seek not aught for myself, wert thou free to distribute the gold of Afric's mines. I covet not wealth. Riches, like birds, are always on the wing, and seldom rest on the branch that would best bear them."

"What is it you desire, then?" inquired Don Sanchez. "If it is aught a Christian and a knight may grant, and yet neither disgrace cross nor lance, I will promise to grant it."

"For myself I ask nothing," said the Talba. "Promise to restore the fallen honour of the house of Alcanzor, if you regain the power to do it. Render back to the widow and the fatherless that which oppression has torn from them. Bid their homes once more receive them in peace; pluck from off their forehead the vile brand of slavery, and let Aza and Hamet once more be amongst their people, as were their fathers—free, honoured, and beloved."

"How can I do this?" replied Don Sanchez. "The father of Hamet was a Moorish prince, and lost all in battle."

"Not in battle," exclaimed Aza, "but by treachery."

"Ay," said the Talba, "the castle of Alcanzor was betrayed, even like this very fortress in which you now find a shelter. Like this also, it was made by cruelty the castle of death. I ask not that you should restore Hamet to such power as his father wielded, for that you could not do. His kingdom has passed away, like the glory of a setting sun. I ask his freedom, his recall from banishment, his restoration to such parts of his father's possessions as may fit the con-

dition of a sharif nobly born. Promise this, and I will command such aid in your service as you dream not of receiving."

"I do promise it," said Don Sanchez, "if I have the power. But where will be that power? I am not king of Portugal, that I should hope to fulfil the promise."

"Allah will give you means to do it," replied the Talba, "for you have heard the widow's prayer."

"Hark!" cried Don Sanchez; "what sound was that?"

"It is the note of a bugle," said Don John, who, busied in examining a suit of harness just come from the hand of the armourer, had scarcely heeded the conversation that passed between Sanchez and the Moors. "It is most likely a messenger from thy friends. I will to the gateway, and learn these tidings."

"Do so," replied Don Sanchez, "but beware to whom you open the gates."

"Fear me not," answered Don John: "I will lack no caution."

He left the chamber, whilst Don Sanchez, who, in the midst of the many anxieties that occupied his mind, had the faculty of retaining the most perfect self-possession, and was even thoughtful in exercising the duties of humanity, pointed out such arrangements to Aza as were necessary for the comfort of herself and her companions in the fortress.

Don John soon executed his commission; and hurried steps announced his return with eager impatience. A look of dismay was in his countenance as he burst into the apartment, exclaiming, "Fatal news do I bring, Don Sanchez: dare you be a man, and hear it at once from my lips?"

"Speak it," said Don Sanchez: "I am not one to die at the hearing of ill news, whilst I wear a sword that shall shew my sorrow for it. Speak your news. Some evil fortune has befallen our friends."

"Evil fortune, indeed!" replied Don John. "Don Pedro has advanced on Codecyra, surprised the guard, and taken possession of the town; whilst your friends who were in it are all, save one, fallen, or prisoners."

Don Sanchez received this intelligence without a word; but a change, like that of death, came over his countenance, and his lips quivered. "What more?" at length he said. "A lost town and slaughtered friends are things that call on us to dip our mourning robes in blood. What more? Speak the whole, I command you speak."

"Your friend, Don Estevan of Aviero, who alone escaped,

has thrown himself into the fortress of St. Mary," continued Don John, "with not a dozen followers. Don Pedro is said to be on the march to take the place by storm. Should he reach it ere a reinforcement can arrive to support the gallant Don Estevan, your friends must perish."

"Give me my armour," said Don Sanchez. "Estevan shall be succoured. Not a hair of his head shall fall if I can avert the danger."

"You will not leave us!" exclaimed Don John and the prior together. "You cannot take from this place a force sufficient to aid Don Estevan. Death and ruin must ensue. Your own life will be forfeited, whilst your followers are lost."

"Life or death—I care not," said Don Sanchez. "I led my generous friend, Estevan of Aviero, into this peril, and it shall never be said that I left him exposed to the storm whilst I shrouded my own head beneath the concealment of a mountain fortress. I will hence ere dawn."

"Go not, my son, go not to meet this danger," said the prior. "I will say masses and orisons for Don Estevan's preservation; or, if he falls, for the safe passage of his soul. Take comfort then from my words, but do not leave this shelter."

"I am resolute, sir prior," replied Don Sanchez. "Let us each to our calling. Prayers are the churchman's weapons, but the knight's must be sword and lance in the battle. I will hence by dawn. I will but rob your little garrison of a few men-at-arms, whilst I require so much good service of you, Don John, as to remain captain of this fortress."

"Do not task my service, noble prince," said Don John, "with a sluggard's duty. Women and boys are guard enough for this stronghold. If you will go on this mad venture, why madness, like the plague, is catching: I will go with you."

"And let me go with you, Don Sanchez," said Hamet: "I would encounter a brave foe; and men say Don Pedro is the boldest lance in Portugal, saving his cruel father."

"No, boy," replied Don Sanchez, "I will give you a better office for unpractised valour. I will make you, young as you are, commander of this fortress in my absence. Hassan, the Talba, will counsel you to keep it wisely."

"Hamet will not need it," said the Talba, "and I must hence. When the day-star is seen in the grey of the morning light, Hassan retraces his steps down the mountain paths."

"Would you leave us too?" said Aza Anzurez. "Go not, I beseech you. Think, after the departure of Don Sanchez,

should the foe come, like the wolf in the night, to prowl amid these mountains, Hamet will need thy counsel to keep these towers in safety."

"No peril threatens them," replied Hassan. "I go to serve this gallant prince; to give warning to his friends of his danger; to stir up the spirit of our Moorish warriors, who lie as in a slumber: so heavy a thing is slavery when the mind as well as the body is bowed down by its palsied chain. But I will burst it. Don Sanchez shall receive succours that shall meet him on his way to the fortress of St. Mary ere he thinks they can be summoned. Another cause also calls me hence for a brief space; yet I will return."

"What other cause?" inquired Don Sanchez.

"Ask me not," said the Talba; "it shall not detain me. I will not tarry. A few days passed, and I will appear in the field. Till then, do you, Hamet, keep the gates secured. Let the watch-tower never want its guard. Let the arrow and the bow rest beside the soldier's bed, and thou art safe; for never have I seen a stronger defence than this fortress of Death. Well does it deserve its name; since it has the power to strike all who approach it, whilst, like the grave, it holds fast all who pass within its gates. Thy mother has looked on war and battle. Should need be, she will aid thee with wise counsels."

"And I will thank thee, youth, for thy care," said Don Sanchez; "and I trust the time will come when words shall be exchanged for deeds of better worth. I go to give some instructions to my people: ere dawn I will away."

The rest of the night was passed in busy preparations for the speedy departure of Don Sanchez.

The Talba retired to a small turret in which he was to take some repose ere he returned to Cintra. Aza, her son, and the Moors who bore her company, also retired to rest. Gradually the little fortress sunk into silence, and nothing was heard save the wind, that blew loudly and howled along the deep hollows of the surrounding precipices. The waterfall murmured in melancholy cadence to the night wind; and though a few clouds wandered over the face of the moon, they were not sufficient to hide her brilliant light, or the thousands of stars that glittered in the skies.

The Talba, ere he slept, opened the casement in his turret, and dwelt with the eye of science and of art, for such he deemed his own peculiar studies, on the heavenly bodies. What he there fancied he read in them on this memorable night to us would seem incomprehensible, but to his enthu-

siastic mind it appeared replete with interest and wonder. He made notes of his observations in the parchments which he always carried about his person; and ere he closed the casement, thus addressed himself, as if to some wandering spirit of the air, invisible to mortal eye, but conversant with immortal mind: "Thy behest shall be accomplished; for thou art but a messenger of Allah, whose words, in the mouth of his angel, are as fire. Father of spirits and of men! thou hast made both Moor and Christian; and thy care, which is not wanting to the beasts of the field or the birds of the air, is extended over both. All are thy works! Here rest thy children under thy wing. If thy light fall on a sleeping world, or the heavens be black with darkness, the eye of God looks through all. To-morrow I will be thy instrument, to do thy will. Guard, O Allah! the widowed Aza and her son, and this night bless the couch that gives rest to me, thy servant, who am full of sorrows and full of days."

The Talba threw himself on his bed, and a sleep, as calm as that of infancy, refreshed his weary limbs. Ere morning had opened her "golden gates" in the east, he arose; and, as the war-horse which bore Don Sanchez from the fortress was heard to tramp along the dangerous path, followed by his master's companions in arms and in toil, the Talba girded up his mantle, quitted the turret, slaked his thirst with a morning draught of fair water, and, taking some refreshments in his scrip, prepared to set out.

With slow steps he descended the narrow defile, and ere the turn of the road shut out from his eyes the last view of the castle, he paused, and looked upon it with affectionate earnestness. His heart was in the fortress; but soon his steps, firm and strong as in the days of his youthful vigour, carried him far away on the track for Cintra.

CHAPTER XV.

Good lady!
No court in Europe is too good for thee;
What dost thou then in prison?

SHAKSPEARE.

We must now return to the unhappy Ines, a melancholy captive awaiting the fearful trial of the church, agonised by doubt, and almost by despair. Day after day had rolled on, and no intelligence arrived from Don Pedro. Ines knew nothing, but that he was absent, engaged in wars, bent on subduing his rebel uncle. The solemn injunctions, the powerful, and even fearful causes, her husband had impressed on her mind for concealing the marriage, remained in full force upon her memory. Even could she have supported the idea of a union with Don Diego, it was now impossible; and should the church command it, in fulfilment of the contract, she knew her disobedience would incur the penalty of an imprisonment for life within the walls of a penitentiary so fearful, that nothing certain of it was known, and only whispered tales of its horrors were spread abroad to deter the obdurate from falling within their vortex. What had she to hope? From human means, it should seem, nothing. On the very day of her imprisonment she had contrived to send a letter to Don Pedro, couched in terms of the keenest feeling, acquainting him with her actual situation, and her approaching fate. This letter her faithful Ximena had undertaken to get conveyed to Don Pedro by a hand she could trust as securely as her own. Yet no intelligence had arrived in reply to it. In these times of confusion and civil strife, when every traveller was liable to be stopt on suspicion, she dreaded to think what might have been the fate of her letter—of the messenger! Don Pedro might even now be ignorant of her deep distress.

In the agony of doubt and suspense, another thought, more terrible than death itself, crossed her mind—he might be faithless to his marriage vows. He might be cruel enough, seeing how inexorable was his father, to seize on this occasion to abandon her, and give her up to be dealt with by the church for her offence. This thought brought with it feelings of un-

utterable agony; for nothing so much wounds a tender breast as the supposed ingratitude of the dearest object of its affections; and Ines could not conceal from herself, though she endeavoured to do so, that, even in the midst of Don Pedro's devoted love, there had been a lurking spirit of pride which seemed to upbraid that very love for having fixed its hopes on one so much beneath him. She had seen him angry with himself for such a feeling; for nothing is so quick-sighted as the eye of affection in woman. She had seen this; she was certain of the existence of such a spirit; and often suspected that Don Pedro, even unconsciously, suffered his pride to act upon his mind, in the concealment of his marriage, as powerfully as any of those causes of alarm which arose from the hatred and cruel disposition of his father.

Ines loved her husband with all the devotion of tenderness the female heart is so formed to experience: yet she had something in her of her father's lofty spirit; and though, won by the importunity of Don Pedro's passionate addresses, she had been imprudent enough to wed privately, still her sense of what she owed to herself came to her relief. It taught her that she ought not to press upon Don Pedro to declare her to be his wife, unless he felt quite as willing to own her for such as she was to be acknowledged.

"I have given him," would she say in her prison hours, "all that a woman can give. My heart, my soul is his—true in life or death. He is my husband; and though, as a prince, he may be ashamed to own as his wife the simple daughter of an unfortunate Castilian nobleman, yet he shall never blush to feel I was unworthy of his confidence. I will be as proud in suffering, as he can be to let me thus suffer for his sake. When he looks on the grave of the unhappy Ines de Castro, who, in obedience to him, buried with herself the fatal secret of her marriage, he will be just to her memory, and death will conquer that pride which destroyed her who loved him with an affection that neither agony of mind nor body could subdue. But my children—oh, that I could see my poor children!—never, never, shall I behold them more. Oh, that death would end these terrible hours!—when, when shall I find peace in the grave? There is none for me on earth."

Such thoughts often wrought on her mind till she became wandering and half distracted by a keen sense of their agony. Then would she exclaim, "My children! my children!" hour after hour, till her prison, her sorrows, the expected day of her trial, the horrors of perpetual imprisonment, were forgotten,

and nothing was present to her mental vision but the cherub looks and the artless tenderness of her hapless infants. So powerful were these wanderings of distracting thoughts, that she would talk as if the poor children were present to listen, stretch out her arms to press them to her maternal bosom, and clasp nothing but air. And then a chilling sense of her own wanderings would force conviction upon her, when, throwing herself on the ground, she would give vent to her feelings in those bursts of tears and grief that, however painful, saved her, perhaps, from becoming an absolute maniac.

It was on the very day before her expected trial, that Alonso, in the hope of shaking her resolution, suffered her father to visit her. He found Ines something calmer than usual; for her overburdened heart had been relieved by one of those bursts of sorrow we have so feebly attempted to describe. The meeting between the father and daughter was in the highest degree affecting. All the severe character of Don Manuel seemed to be lost in grief. For some time neither spoke, and they embraced in silence; whilst the tears that coursed down the old man's cheek told his daughter of a tenderness of affection she had been little accustomed to witness in him.

"Ines," said Don Manuel, "you may well know for what purpose I am here; since there is but one cause that would have obtained me permission to see you before the appointed trial that awaits you. I have Alonso's command to visit this prison."

"You come to essay my resolution, my father," replied Ines, "but you come in vain."

"I know it," said Don Manuel, "else you were not the daughter of old Manuel de Castro. Don Diego, who could so persecute my child—who would take her after the solemn avowal she so publicly made of the motive that induced her to avoid a hated marriage with him—Don Diego, who could do this, is unworthy of her."

"Praised be the saints of heaven!" exclaimed Ines. "It is comfort to hear you say this. I am resolute in my denial, yet, oh! how bitter would have been my resolution must I have persevered in it in defiance of a father's will! Thank heaven this suffering is spared me. For the rest—I can but die once. The penitentiary of St. Magdalen may hasten the hour of my death, but has no power beyond the grave."

"Yet to part thus," said Don Manuel; "to see my only daughter, one whose mind can resolve so steadily, and suffer

thus firmly; to see her for the last time, and in a prison! where none but the base, the criminal, should shroud them with their infamy; this is too much—this unmans me—and makes me wish that these old eyes, that weep to see it, were closed and dark as the grave. Ines, I would not shake your resolution; yet, if your heart should relent towards Don Diego, or should female weakness overpower you; think how awful are the denunciations that await those who dare disobey the commands of the church."

"My father," said Ines, "I will even yet hope the patriarch may be more merciful than we expect. He may not confirm the contract."

"You hope in vain," replied Don Manuel. "The patriarch was never known to annul a contract so solemnly given and avouched. And you, Ines, and I also, wretched father! have spoken the word to establish its validity."

"You spoke truth, my father," replied Ines, "as became a Castilian nobleman. Do not let that thought distress you. I shall appear before the tribunal; I will not tamely yield to a perpetual prison, where my only hope will be death. Boldly will I appeal to the patriarch, and endeavour to awaken mercy. Though he is a churchman, yet is he a man; and the sorrows of a woman, of a daughter, for thy sake, will move him."

"Hope it not," said Don Manuel. "He is not a father. Bound by his vows to feel no wedded tie, the churchman and the monk, grown old without one tender care, a solitary and childless man, is callous to human affection as to human weakness: his virtues are austerities; his mercies look beyond the grave, but are seldom shewn in any touch of earthly pity."

"Then patience be my help," said Ines; "for if the patriarch have no mercy, I have no hope, indeed! Never could I wed Don Diego, even if I would do so."

"What means that expression?" exclaimed Don Manuel.

"Nothing but what I say," replied Ines: "I could not wed him."

"You have some meaning, something more than the mere words imply. It is hidden from me; tell it me, I beseech you. Ines, Ines! speak the truth; do not turn the sorrows of a father into the agony of doubt. You do mean something."

"Ask me nothing, my father," said Ines: "I tell you truth. I could not wed Don Diego. Press me no farther—as you would do the last kind act you may ever have the power to do for your unhappy child."

"You have raised a doubt—a dreadful doubt," said Don

Manuel, as his countenance expressed the most agitated feelings: "do not drive me to madness. Tell me all. Trust to my love: unbosom yourself to me, Ines; and though guilty, and even shamed, you will still find in me a father."

"I am innocent," exclaimed Ines, "innocent—as heaven shall judge me. No blush of shame will ever stain your honest cheek for the unhappy Ines de Castro. I will not deceive you—a fatal secret weighs on my mind. Yet, as there is truth in heaven (to whom I look for my last hope), I speak it, when I say, I would give worlds did I but dare reveal it to you; but my honour is bound to the concealment. Now, my father, would you know it?"

Old Don Manuel stood motionless; surprise seemed to overpower his mind. A dreadful apprehension of some fatal secret—something which concerned Ines and the prince—had long haunted his mind with suspicion. This hour appeared to confirm his apprehensions, so far at least as to shew him they were not altogether unfounded. He looked upon Ines with a countenance in which was written the struggles of a man whose life-blood flowed from the source of honour. The struggle was great, but it was decisive; and the feelings of what he deemed due to honour prevailed over those due to a father. "No!" Don Manuel at length said in a low, yet firm voice; "if to know this fatal secret I must learn it at the forfeit of a daughter's honour, let me die in ignorance. Name it no more: I would forget its existence. I would not wish to know it," he added in great agitation, whilst he paced the apartment as if endeavouring to argue down the importunate feelings that compelled him to desire the unlimited confidence of his child.

"Father," said Ines, "though I may not reveal this, yet on my knees I would beseech you to pardon your erring, your unhappy daughter, who dared to cherish that which she may not avow even to you. Pardon this act of disobedience, for which heaven now visits her in its severest wrath."

As she spoke, Ines cast herself at her father's feet, raised her hands, and looked imploringly upon him. Don Manuel bent over her, lifted her from the ground, folded her to his heart, and with a solemn energy, that shewed the generous temper of his mind, pronounced the pardon she desired, accompanying it with a parent's blessing.

"We part then," said Ines, "perhaps for ever; but in love and peace. A father's forgiveness will console my dying hour. The rest I will learn to bear, as becomes the daughter

of a man so just, so generous. Farewell, my dear father: give me your prayers."

"I cannot part with thee," cried Don Manuel: "I cannot look my last upon my child. I thought I could have borne this: I had sworn to be a man; but nature will be heard, and I am a child again."

He threw himself upon a seat as he spoke, leaned on a table that stood in the prison, and covered his face with his hands, whilst his breast heaved with emotion, and every nerve in his hardy frame seemed shaken with dreadful agitation.

Shocked, distressed by witnessing a scene so cruel to the heart of Ines, for a moment she lost the sense of her own sufferings in those of her father. She longed to relieve his misery, as far as it could be relieved, by confiding to him the truth. Her secret trembled on her lips; but recollecting that if she did so, Don Manuel, in the hope of saving her, would most probably reveal it to the king, her high resolution once more gained the mastery, and she determined to suffer even this greatest trial of all, rather than disobey the sacred injunctions of her husband.

At length the time expired which had been allowed Don Manuel for this distressing interview. He arose, paced the chamber, took the hands of Ines within his own, looked upon her, as if every instant which gave her to his sight was inestimable, kissed her repeatedly, as he murmured blessings; but, unable to trust his resolution with a last adieu, he once more emphatically pressed her to his bosom and rushed from her presence, convinced that, in this world, he had parted from his child for ever.

We shall not dwell on the cruel conflict of distress which the unhappy captive experienced after the interview with her father; but the trial of her feelings on this memorable evening had not yet ended. At the usual hour some slight refreshment was brought into her apartment by the person appointed to attend upon her during her confinement. Aware of what she had to undergo on the ensuing day, and anxious to support herself to endure it with strength of body as well as fortitude of mind, Ines endeavoured to partake of the frugal meal that was set before her; but so great was the choking sensation she experienced, a kind of hysteria common under such trying circumstances, that she could only swallow a few mouthfuls of food, and with difficulty drank a cup of wine tempered with water. At length she heard the outward bars of her prison secured for the night. Weary and worn with

anxiety and watching, she prepared to throw herself on a couch that was in her apartment, and hoped sleep, that balm of misery, would for a while suspend the sense of suffering, and renew her strength for endurance on the following day.

But ere she sought repose, on bended knees she told her beads, according to the custom of her faith, fervently prayed for pardon of her sins, and, if it might be the will of heaven, for a mitigation of the sufferings by which she was surrounded. Her father, her husband, and her children, were named in her orisons with the most ardent feelings of piety and affection; tears dropped from her eyes as she called on God to bless them. At length she threw herself on her couch; but restless and uneasy, more than once she arose and paced the apartment, dreading to lie down for the night till weariness should compel sleep. All was silent. No sound reached her ear, but that of a bell as it struck the hour of midnight, and the sighing and moaning of the wind as it came mournfully through the long vaults and passages that led to the prison.

There was but one window in this apartment. Through it was now seen the sickly light of the moon, over whose face flitted dark and heavy clouds. As Ines looked round on the gloomy walls, and thought how soon she might exchange them for the terrific cells of the penitentiary, where heretics to the faith, and many of those unhappy wretches who had fallen under the maledictions of the church, breathed out their souls in torture; fancy, at this hour, active in picturing new scenes of distress in their darkest colouring, so overcame her, that, unable to sustain such feelings, she again threw herself on the couch, and endeavoured, by preserving a fixed position, to bring on that torpor of the senses which is often the forerunner of sleep.

Nature at last yielded the relief so desired—she slept; but uneasy visions haunted her repose, and in her dreams carried her to that abode of penitence so much dreaded in her waking thoughts. A sound as of hollow echoes stole into the dreamer's ear; she started, looked around, and her blood curdled with terror, as, lifting her head from the pillow, she saw, by the light of a lamp that burned in the apartment, a figure more terrific than the images of her disordered fancy, standing at her feet. She endeavoured to call aloud for assistance, but her cries were alone returned by the vaulted roof.

The midnight intruder raised his hand in token of silence, and said in a voice full of energy, "Fear me not, but listen."

Trembling, doubting, scarcely conscious if she still slum-

bered, or if waking, her senses told her truth, Ines made an effort to address the awful figure, for such it seemed to her, that now stood before her. Her lips refused utterance: she could not speak, though her eyes continued their fixed gaze, as the damps that bedewed her forehead and limbs spoke the agony of fear.

The figure was that of a Moor—armed; a corslet of steel was on his breast; and though the furrows of age were in his brow, that shadowed an eye full of energy and fire, his bare and tawny arms displayed muscles like cords in strength and power. The light of the lamp burned feebly, it shewed but partially the features of the Moor. Dark as they were by nature, they looked terrific from the deep shadows that rendered hard and marked every line of a countenance in which there was an indescribable expression, that called up feelings allied to a world of awe and wonder.

"Dost thou know me?" said the Moor. The voice in which these few words were spoken thrilled through the soul of Ines, alive as she was to impressions of terror. She answered, almost unconsciously, "No, I know you not. Why at this hour—in this place? Why are you here? Holy angels, guard me!"

"They do guard you," answered the Moor; "it is their office to watch the pillow of the just. Christian, I know thee. Dost thou remember the arena on the day consecrated by thy people to a prophet of thy faith?"

"I do remember," replied Ines; "but what of that?"

"It was thy hand, daughter of affliction," said the Moor, "that was extended in pity to Hamet, the son of Alcanzor. Thy mantle of silk was the means to save him from death; and now to thy own bosom shall the good deed become as a buckler of iron to repel the cruel shafts of malice. Lady, it is Hassan, the Talba, who stands before thee. He comes as thy deliverer. Now dost thou know me?"

"Well do I know thy name," replied Ines, "yet to a Christian ear it is full of terror; for, if fame speaks truth, often has thy sword been dyed in Christian blood. What canst thou do for me?"

"Repay thy own generous act," said Hassan; "render back to thee the good thou hast done to another. The sword that has been raised against the warriors of the Cross, who would enslave the free-born sons of Ismael, shall guard thee whilst this arm has power to lift it. Rise, lady, rise, and fear me not. You know not the Moor: taught by your priests and

monks, you deem me accursed, base, ignoble, incapable of aught that is generous in man; yet know me better; and if not for the sake of a fellow-being, yet for the sake of Him who made both Moor and Christian learn to honour truth."

"I do honour truth," said Ines, "when I respect the instructions of the holy ministers of our faith."

"Is that truth," exclaimed the Talba, "which teaches cruelty, falsehood, oppression, to despise and abhor our people? Truth is as the sun; there is that of light and majesty in her brow which cannot be hidden. It is night when she is absent; and error, like darkness, becomes universal. When her light is set, who shall shew the way? Dark were the precepts taught thee when thou wast made to think us, the freeborn Moors, accursed in the sight of Allah."

Ines trembled as the enthusiastic Talba stood before her, and with a raised voice, a mien elevated to suit the high aspirations of his mind, continued to pour forth those vindications of his fallen people, that he hoped would raise their character so as to give confidence to the unhappy captive, that she might trust in him for deliverance, and find the soul of the Moor could be as great as that of the Christian. Well did Hassan know the deep prejudices entertained against all those of his complexion and religion. He saw that Ines beheld him with a feeling bordering on horror. He therefore thus continued: "Even at this moment, when I would save you from bondage and death, you mistrust me. I can read it in your eye, which glances on me as doth the timid bird that fears the snare of the fowler: you mistrust me because I am a Moor! Hath not He who made thy cheek white as the lily of the field, and cast on mine the darkness of a warmer sun, hath He not given life to us both? Am not I as much his care, and stand in his presence with the same assurance as thyself? I breathe the free air as well as thou: are not heat and cold, the winter's wind, or the light breath of spring, as obvious to my senses as to thee? These are all outward things; but look on the inward soul; and there read if the Moor, the despised Moor, is below the Christian. I am here to save thee. No sooner did I learn thy danger, than Allah pointed the means to deliver thee. Thy youth, thy generous act to Hamet, the cruelty of thy oppressor—for Alonso thirsts for thy blood—all moved me to save thee. Not thy beauty did this, though that be sweet as roses at the birth of summer. At my command these prison doors have opened, and the Talba will this night guide thee forth in safety."

"What assurance shall I have to trust your words, your purpose? The means by which you came hither are unknown to me. What will assure my trust in thee?"

"The assurance I give," answered the Moor, "shall be found in the act that saves thee. To do this, I have exposed my life to danger and to death. As the wing of the eagle fluttereth over her nest, even so have I watched over thee, to guide thy flight in safety."

"Whither can I fly?" said Ines: "I am here within the walls of a prison. You, of whom I know nothing, saving that by your own confession you are that Hassan once the terror of the Christian hosts, you visit my cell in the dead hour of night, to hold out offers to save me, yet name not the means. No, wretched as I am, I will not willingly rush into guilt to avoid danger. It may be that the mortal enemy of my soul, to lure me on to ruin, assists thee in some dreadful design. I have appealed to the church; rather let me await its decree, though it doom me to misery, so I may escape this temptation laid to wreck both soul and body. Tell me all thy purpose, or I will not trust thee, for thou art one of those whose office it is to deal in accursed arts forbidden by God and man."

"It is false," exclaimed the Talba, "false and ungenerous. But I can bear with misery. It is the parent of wild words and wilder thoughts. If to read the book of nature, outspread by God himself, whose secrets must be learnt by the deep studies of the sage, if these are accursed arts, I practise them. But no spirit, saving that which comes with mercy on his wing, was ever the partner of my counsels. I have watched, lady, by the midnight hour, the wandering fires of heaven, whilst a sleeping world was wrapt in silence. I have read the destinies of men, nor ceased my mental vision till the morning star has glimmered through the mist of clouds. It is Allah, the father of Moor and Christian, by whom I am made to thee as a spirit of mercy, that shall throw abroad thy prison doors. Up, then, and follow me, ere it be too late."

"Tell me more," exclaimed Ines; "explain thy purpose, or I rest here and await my fate."

"Mistrustful Christian!" said Hassan. "Then learn the truth, and let the words which shall strike terror into thy secret soul teach thee to believe a Moor can be trusted. Follow me. There wait without those who, mounted on steeds fleet as the foot of the gazelle, shall convey thee to thy husband—to Don Pedro!"

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Ines. "Is it then known to

thee that I—that I am—the wife, the wretched wife of Don Pedro? Has he sent thee?"

"He sent me!" cried the Talba, in a tone that expressed the highest indignation at the thought. "He! I go not at Don Pedro's bidding, except it were to strike a blow with him for life or death. I am his foe till life be past; and my hatred should live even beyond the tomb, if deepest passion could pass the gulf of death. I owe him that debt of injury not to be forgiven by man."

"And whilst you declare this," said Ines, "you offer me deliverance! I will not follow the steps of my husband's enemy. Yet how you know Don Pedro is such to me, God can alone discover. I do believe thou hast power with the dark and invisible world of evil spirits; for them, or for thee, I will not endanger my soul."

"Thy safety lies with me," continued Hassan, "thy danger with them of thy own faith. Don Pedro is my enemy: he surprised the castle of Alcanzor, my friend, my prince! He destroyed, or made captive, my people, cast me into bonds, covered me with ruin! For these things am I his enemy, his open, honourable foe. But to thee, who saved the life of Hamet, I am as a friend that shall never fail thee. I war not with women; how far less with one whose arm was stretched forth in mercy to save the noble son of Alcanzor from the fury of the mountain bull. Be not lost to thyself—to thy young and innocent children!"

"My children!" exclaimed Ines: "dost thou know, too, that I am a mother? an anxious, broken-hearted mother?"

"Ay," said Hassan, "and can feel for her whose soul yearns after the sucklings of her bosom. Hear me; time presses; I must be brief. Hast thou forgotten the young prince Ferdinand, the son of Don Pedro, by his first wife, Constantia?"

"Forget the gentle Ferdinand!" exclaimed Ines, "never! Constantia gave him, when dying, into my arms. I have been to the boy as a mother; he is dear to me as my own children."

"And well does he repay thy affection," said Hassan, "with a love and gratitude as tender as to a parent. He is young, but full of noble qualities. I caused Ximena, thy faithful Moorish damsel, to make him acquainted with thy peril. He will be the companion of thy flight, attended by a few of our people who may be trusted. With Prince Ferdinand you have nothing to fear: his presence is your shield. Even now, at this dead hour of night, he awaits thee without these fatal

vaults: by his means I gained access to them, to guide thee forth to join him. Ere dawn, you will be beyond pursuit; and Ferdinand conducts thee to the prince, his father, thy husband. I shall have saved thee; since by my means only did he know thy danger. Alonso kept him in ignorance of it, fearing his love for thee; but the noble boy no sooner heard the truth, than he freely consented to take part in thy deliverance."

"Yet tell me," said Ines, "for to me it seems full of wonder, how knew you that I was the wife of Don Pedro? Ferdinand knows it not. Thou wilt not betray me? If thou hast mercy, betray not a secret, whose discovery may be fatal to me and mine."

"Fear not," said the Talba; "ask me nothing. Rest satisfied, Hassan scorns an act of treachery; that is a Christian vice. Will you now trust me? will you now follow me?"

"Moor, I will trust thee," answered Ines; "and as you are faithful to the miserable, even so may God shew mercy to you in the hour of your need: yet you are the enemy of Don Pedro!"

"Ay," exclaimed the Talba, "but an honourable enemy; for never did I profess to be his friend. Take my defiance, lady, to thy Christian lord, and thy debt to me is paid."

"Not so," said Ines; "I will rather thank thee, if I dare do as much, in his name, as the herald of peace."

"Peace is in the heavens," said Hassan; "the din of arms has affrighted her from earth. Away, lady, away! throw on thy mantle, muffle thy face; I will lead thee forth. Fear nothing; I hold the keys of a secret passage from thy prison ward; all is prepared for flight. May Allah guide thee! Fare thee well, gentle lady: shew mercy, when thou hast the power to do so, to the despised children of Ismael. Remember, that God in the magnitude of his great spirit raised the Moor to free the Christian. Peace be with thy steps, for thou hast a noble heart."

Ines, in breathless agitation, scarcely trusting her senses, so much were they even yet overpowered with wonder and surprise, followed Hassan, who speedily led her through a dark and secret passage, hitherto unknown to her, of which he had obtained the keys. In a short time she was without the prison walls, and mounted a horse held in readiness for her flight. The young Prince Ferdinand, with a few followers, was by her side. The Talba waved his hand as the party set forward on their road through the forest.

CHAPTER XVI.

There's two of you; the devil makes a third!
And threefold vengeance tend upon your steps.

SHAKSPEARE.

ALVARO GONSALEZ, the smooth-tongued courtier, who had duped even Alonso, notwithstanding his proneness to jealousy and suspicion, was, on the night Ines de Castro escaped from prison, in deep conference with Don Diego and Arias Coello the taxman. It will be needless, perhaps, to add, that the designs which brought such a triumvirate together must be dark and dangerous. The scene we have to detail will best explain their nature.

In the middle of the room stood a table. Various letters and papers, with writing materials, lay on it in a confused heap. To assist or cheer the subject of their deliberations, a silver flagon, containing some choice wine, was also placed before them. At the moment we open this chapter, Alvaro Gonsalez was in earnest conference with the taxman, whose cautious and shrewd glances, as he now and then raised his head from its usual downcast position, sufficiently shewed that he was watchful, even whilst interested in the subject of debate. Don Diego spoke but occasionally, and looked restless and anxious, as he paced the chamber with folded arms, like a man who would endeavour to dispel or divert some harassing cause of vexation. Suddenly Diego stopped in the midst of his walk, and exclaimed, "Hark! surely that was the bell of St. Mary's? It is past midnight. I wonder where he tarries!"

"He will be here anon," said Gonsalez. "To you minutes seem as hours;" and turning to the taxman, he continued his discourse: "Dost thou doubt what I tell thee, Arias Coello? Why, I thought better of thee, man, and that thou wert a hawk to fly at whatever game was started."

"You talk lightly, Don Gonsalez," said Arias. "Though I grant there is reason, much of reason, in what you have this night laid before me, yet, in plain words, I tell you, that I am a man who would use discretion even in adventuring a

bold stroke to better my condition. I grant you, discretion without zeal is slow to profit; but zeal without discretion is foolish, hair-brained: now join me these two together, make thy zeal brother to my discretion, and I will call it wisdom."

"The wisdom of Solomon himself, most discreet taxman," said Gonsalez, with a sneer; "but, trust me, thy discretion, Arias, would never lift thee out of the mire of thy own miserable fortunes, did not my zeal lend it wings. The king hath made thee taxman; and wherefore hath he done this? shall I tell thee? Even as he makes some fellow, sentenced to the galleys, executioner of the last office of the laws. There must be a man found to strike a head from the block; and so the odium of the office is cast on one already held in contempt. It is to such respect, on the part of Alonso, that thou art indebted to him for thy present office."

"You rate me low, indeed," said Arias Coello, "to liken me to a criminal saved from ignominy himself, that he may be the instrument to execute it upon others. I am not a man to put up with ill words."

"Not when thou canst help it, Arias, I grant," replied Gonsalez: "but, good or ill, my words speak truth. Hath the king done thee any favour, save that of making thee a thing to vent curses upon? Is not thy visitation to gather a hated tax, expected like the mildew, the blight, that cuts off the fruits in its course, and leaves behind it pestilence and plague? Trust me, thou art as deeply cursed as if Alonso had suffered thee to grow rich in office: but he to thee has been as hard and griping as thou art to others, wringing from thee thy gold and silver, as if it had been drops of blood from thy heart."

"It is true," said Coello, "the king has laid a violent hand on what is mine own; he has, too, put scorn upon me in many bitter words. Yet what of that? I am not a man to desire wealth; that is, not without discretion; for, as the holy patriarch said at the preaching in aid of the poor brothers of Jerusalem, 'Riches in this life have the wings of the falcon; they spread abroad and fly away; but when we die, and go down into the tomb, they have not so much as the foot of a sloth to follow after!'—I thank the blessed St. Francis, I was never thought a covetous man."

"Nor will we, who are thy friends," said Gonsalez, "suffer thee to obtain that character. Well hast thou harangued on the vanity of riches. And yet, Arias, preaching like the patriarch, on the vanity of riches, scarcely suits with a taxman's calling. It is something like the devil contemning the

wages of sin, whilst he holds the bag as the great paymaster of iniquity. Now I, Arias, who neither preach like the patriarch, nor condemn the well-filled bag, though the devil himself should hold it to me,—I am a man who, as did the heathens of old, disdain not openly to avow my worship of the golden idol that dazzles the eyes of all mankind. Do thou rail at riches, whilst I beg of thee the loan of the casket thou hast under thy cloak, to buy partisans and arms for our cause."

"Think what you do," said Coello: "the contents of that casket are moneys collected from the tax on the Moors, and due to the king. On St. Julian's day must I render in my account."

"And before St. Julian's day, if we prosper," replied Gonsalez, "the king shall not have the power to demand it. Thou, Arias, shalt have thy acquittance from Don Sanchez: nay, thou, a zealous member of the faction, the very gold and silver mines of our cause, shalt have thy present subsidy paid back to thee with interest, according to the rate of thy own conscience. What would a taxman desire more? Think of that, Arias, and not of the king. Tush, man, thou shalt beard Alonso, and make his so much vaunted iron lance a spit to dress larks upon; so thou wilt but go on with us to the end."

"How bold thou art, Gonsalez," said Coello: "I wonder how thou canst dare face the king, whilst carrying on these intrigues against him in the dark: thou art a daring hypocrite, beshrew my heart else."

"I a hypocrite!" exclaimed Gonsalez: "thou liest in thy throat to say so."

"But the king," said Coello, "is yet great in power, and should these designs miscarry, I would fain have you note, that I take no part in direct opposition to the throne. Something I would see amended in the state, I own; but take note, this money is lent, or rather forced from me (since I know, did I resist, thou wouldst lay the strong hand upon it), for no evil purpose. Be the uses of the money on thy own head: thou wilt render it me again, with interest, ere St. Julian's day!"

"Ay," replied Gonsalez, "and with such interest as shall make thee change thy moody caution, cold and meagre as it is, into a spirit that would match the fighting bulls of Estramadura. Come, Coello, throw off thy mask; we act not mysteries here: shew us the devil with an open face; for his horns peep out from under thy grey locks, which are something too thin to hide them."

"I am no hypocrite," said the taxman, sullenly; "but you mistake me. I join you heart and hand: but wherefore should I give up my ancient respect for my good name? Did not I look to thrive in these changes you meditate, I would not put my honesty to the test of such companionship."

"Thou shalt thrive," said Gonsalez: "we will have brave times; and in honour of them I pledge thee in this cup of wine. Don Diego, thou wilt fill one to the prosperity of our cause. Drink, Diego, drink, as I have done this night. It will give spirit to thy purpose, for thou art as dumb and as devoid of life as if thou wert under penance."

"I marvel at this delay," said Don Diego, who had little heeded what had been spoken: "it is past midnight; and if there should be any miscarriage in this business, all is lost. The king may discover who connived at it, Don Sanchez be nothing profited,—whilst I ——"

"It is something late," said Gonsalez, "but fear not; all was well arranged; it cannot fail. You will soon learn that we are awaited."

"Have you all ready?" inquired Diego. "Where are the cloaks? Is Coello prepared what to say in the morning, to any who may inquire for us in the ——"

"He is prepared to say, or to swear, to anything I will have him," replied Gonsalez, "even should it be to swear to his own honesty; though I were loth to lay perjury on so tender a conscience."

"But should the Moor be faithless!" said Diego: "I liked not the manner in which he at first dealt with us; something there was that made me doubt him."

"You have but told me a part of your purpose," said Coello. "I am to take some share in this business, wherefore, then, not reveal the truth at once to me? When you wanted my service, it was, 'Good Coello, thou wilt do this;' and, 'Wise Coello, thou wilt say this;' and, 'Honest Coello, thou mayst be trusted in this.' But the trust is but half reposed."

"Then I will make it whole," said Gonsalez: "thou art no stranger, taxman, to the claims this knight, my friend here, hath on the Lady Ines de Castro."

"I want not to be told that," said Coello. "Was I not in the hall, near the king's own person, when I saw thee and Diego lay snares for her, as the serpent did for our first mother? I doubt thou wouldst tempt her beauty to sin and sorrow, but for the protection of the holy church to which she has appealed."

"The snares I would lay for her concern not her beauty," said Gonsalez; "that part of the business lies with my friend, though policy and my regard for Diego make me instrumental in his success. Know then, Coello, that even counsellors, subtle as thyself, may sometimes be outwitted. When Don Diego asserted, before the king, his claim on the lady, by her own contract, he never dreamed of that cursed appeal to the church, nor of her imprisonment—things as fatal to his hopes as any other let or hinderance."

"I would have released her," said Diego, "when I found her persist in that which could not end but in her misery. I would have done this, but for you Gonsalez."

"Ay, for me," replied Gonsalez, "who more ready witted than thyself, whispered in thy ear, that if thou didst persist, even yet would I find means to win her to thy arms."

"Nay, that was not all," said Diego; "you reminded me of what it became my own honour never to forget."

"I did," answered Gonsalez: "I told thee if thou didst resign her, it was as a patient submission to the dastardly blow given thee by thy princely rival Don Pedro. That roused thy spirit."

"And confirmed my resolution," said Diego.

"But all this is foreign to the purpose," observed Coello: "your present plan, it is that I would learn."

"Patience, and it is yours," replied Gonsalez. "Know, then, that the king entrusted me as the guard of this lady during her imprisonment. In fact, I held the keys. Ximena, her Moorish attendant, was allowed to see her. A fortunate circumstance. For, lo, whilst I was devising means to give the captive, with safety to myself, into the power of my friend, Hassan came to me—that old Talba, I mean, who is busied in raising the spirit of the Moors to assist Don Sanchez. He came, and seemed to know much about Donna Ines; ay, more than I could lead him to confess. He proposed to me her escape, as a condition of his farther assistance in our cause. To this I assented, if he would give up Ines to my friend. He was reluctant; but yielded on condition that Don Diego would promise to use her with all honour. He then communicated to me the plan he had formed for her deliverance."

"He! a Moor! a despised infidel!" said Coello.

"It is even so," replied Gonsalez; "and speedily did he execute it. Hassan bade Ximena acquaint Ferdinand with her lady's danger. The boy loved Ines as he would his own mother: so commenced our plan."

"A mad scheme, in sooth," said Coello, "and never to be executed with safety whilst you held the keys as keeper of her prison."

"Oh, content you," replied Gonsalez: "I run no risk. Hear me out; I will be brief: on this night it was agreed that I should absent myself from my lodging in the castle, where, as princes have free access, Ferdinand was to visit my chamber, steal thence the keys of the prison, draw off the guard, as if he had orders from his father to do so, then wait without the walls, that no interruption might occur, whilst Hassan went to the cell and delivered the lady. Then comes our part, which is the great after-game still to be played out."

"A dangerous game," observed Coello.

"But a sure one," said Gonsalez. "Don Diego and myself await at this very hour the return of Hassan. He is to detain the lady and the prince, as if to bring up a sure escort to conduct them to Don Pedro. We sally forth, supported by a chosen band, conduct them, under cover of night, beyond the forest; there they become our—prisoners. Ines is the prize of Don Diego, whilst Prince Ferdinand remains in my hands, a hostage for Don Sanchez; and with such a hostage he may insist upon his own terms with Alonso."

"Knows Don Sanchez of this mad scheme?" said Coello.

"How should he?" replied Gonsalez; "there has been no time to communicate with him. To secure the person of Ferdinand was my own plan, and I triumph in it."

Coello shook his head; but only asked what he must say should his friends Diego and Gonsalez be inquired for in the morning.

"Say the truth," exclaimed Gonsalez, "that we learned Prince Ferdinand, by an ingenious device, had taken advantage of my absence from the castle to free the Lady Ines, and that, on the very instant I knew this, myself and Don Diego set forward in pursuit of the fugitives."

"Hark!" cried Diego, "some one advances."

"It is Hassan," said Gonsalez; "he comes to summon us to action. Put on thy cloak: here is thy helmet, I will assist thee—the visor must be closed;—they must not see us, they must not know us;—our horses wait in readiness—all is prepared."

In another moment the door opened, and the Talba stood before them. He was armed; and there was in his countenance that resolute, intrepid air of courage, which awes as well as commands minds less exalted by high and daring

feelings. Arias Coello, as he looked upon the majestic figure of the Moor, thought he had never seen a man of a more warlike aspect. Hassan, who instantly recognised the taxman, glanced upon him an eye of contempt. Arias shrunk within himself, as if withered by his very look; and drawing back, left his associates to parley with one whose presence he felt, or fancied, to be dangerous as well as overpowering."

Hassan was now in the centre of the chamber, and ere a word escaped his lips, Don Diego exclaimed, as he was adjusting his arms for departure, "We are ready; our horses wait in the court below. At the entrance of the forest, is it not, the Lady Ines attends the escort? She shall not wait long."

"The Lady Ines departed an hour since," said the Moor, in a calm and deliberate manner.

"Gone! Gone! and without us!" exclaimed Diego and Gonsalez in one breath.

"Villain!" cried the latter, "you have betrayed us—ruined our enterprise. Of what avail is her escape with Prince Ferdinand unless we profit by it! Infidel Moor! say—where is she?—what is this?—speak, or, by the rood, my dagger shall pluck the truth from thy accursed Moslem throat."

As he spoke, the passionate Gonsalez, who, notwithstanding all his base qualities, was a fearless and courageous man, rushed on Hassan, and seized him by the upper part of the tunic he wore over his corslet.

The Moor, like a lion that is suddenly roused from his lair, fixed his fiery and intense glance upon Gonsalez; and, without so much as drawing his dagger in self-defence, raised but his powerful arm, and with one effort of his mighty strength, shook off Gonsalez, and cast him at his feet.

"False Christian!" exclaimed the Talba; "thou knight in name, but craven in deed! Think ye that I would betray into the power of cruelty and dishonour a helpless woman, or a helpless boy? It is not thus the law of the Prophet bids the Faithful act the part of a deliverer! Ines de Castro and Prince Ferdinand are by this time, I trust, far on the road to safety. They seek Don Pedro."

"Villain Moor!" cried Don Diego; "you have dealt falsely by us; you have betrayed our cause. Did you not avow yourself to me, even to me, on the very first night we ever met, as the deadly foe of Don Pedro?"

"I avow it still," said the Talba; "but I war with Don Pedro as a man, not as a groveling slave. The war-horse, the trumpet, the wheels of the brazen chariots as they roll on

to the battle, the clash of arms, the glancing of spear and shield,—these speak my hatred of Don Pedro, as, body to body, I would encounter him for life or death. But think not the Talba would darken his own soul by striking at the heart of his enemy through the honour of a woman, or by the ruin of his youthful son."

"Have you betrayed us, then?" said Gonzalez, as even he, villain as he was, felt shamed by the greatness of mind that raised the Moor so much above the Christian. "Have you betrayed us, Talba?" continued Gonsalez; "if you have, your blood or mine must seal an act so fatal."

"I betray you!" exclaimed the Talba; "thy own dark mind, where there is no ray of truth, gives thee that suspicion. I am no traitor to thee, nor to Don Diego. To your cause am I devoted, for unhappily it is linked, hand in hand, with that of the oppressed Moors. They may not be severed. To save a hapless woman is no mark of treachery."

"I would have saved her," said Don Diego; "for this purpose I would have risked life itself, and that you well know; since, from the hour I knew the danger in which she stood—that her death, in all probability, would close the sorrows of her prison—from that hour have I enjoyed no peace; day and night have I laboured, in thought, to devise the means to save her life."

"Then am I more merciful than thou art, Don Diego," said the Talba; "for I have laboured to save her honour—the jewel in woman that gives value to her life. What is it to breathe the air, to drag out a few years more, when the crown of honour is gone, and infamy has set her mark upon that brow where innocence, as a spirit of light, once shone resplendent? Not for this would I have delivered the generous Ines de Castro; for happier far would she be dead, resolved into earth again, than living, that her soul should be dishonoured by thy infamous purpose."

"I will not endure this," cried Diego. "By an artifice, a vile artifice, have you duped Don Gonsalez and myself; deluded our purpose; snatched from us a prize vital to the interests of Don Sanchez, and now brave us to our face. Why did you consent to take part in liberating Donna Ines, if you intended to do this to the hindrance of our cause?"

"I have not done this to your injury," said Hassan. "On one condition only did I promise that Donna Ines should be trusted to your escort; namely, that she should be free to act by the dictates of her own will—safe in honour as in life. You,

Don Diego, gave me no such assurance; wherefore, then, should I have put my trust in you?"

"But, Gonsalez——" said Don Diego.

"Gonsalez promised for himself," replied the Talba, "not for you. Who that would guard the lamb would give it to the keeping of the wolf?"

"All may yet be ours," cried Gonsalez. "Arm, Don Diego, arm; we have horses fleet as the winds, we may yet overtake the fugitives. Let us not lose a moment: I will give orders for instant pursuit;" and as he spoke he advanced towards the door of the chamber.

The Talba threw himself across his path, unsheathed the cimeter he wore by his side, and raised it, as he said, "You pass but through my body to execute your purpose. Who is there here so resolute to be the first to taste of death? I am armed, and have twice thy strength, Gonsalez. The cause I maintain will give me power to crush thee. What wilt thou do? Why fall back? Is it Hassan, or the virtuous cause which he defends, that makes a craven of thee?"

"I am no craven," replied Gonsalez, "and that thou well knowest; for, ere now, I have been where danger and death surrounded me on all sides. If thou wilt know why I would not strike a blow with thee, it is for the sake of our good cause: wanting thy aid, it might fail; for thou art the soul of the Moorish bands, who, at thy word, will rise in the behalf of Don Sanchez. I will not be thy enemy, however much thou hast thwarted our present design."

"I am no enemy of yours," said the Talba, "but when you would injure Donna Ines. Is yonder taxman of your councils, that he is present at this conference?"

"He is," said Don Diego: "by his means we have obtained a supply to aid our friends, and he, too, is an instrument to assist in lulling the suspicions of Alonso. It is in vain for us to act openly until Algarva and the Moorish hosts shall have raised the banner of rebellion; till then our services are best employed in secret measures about the court."

"Beware," said Hassan: "it is dangerous to tamper with the lion in his den. Alonso, treacherous, cruel, and sudden in his passions, if he but suspects your measures, will soon find the means to make you feel his power. You are lost; tarry not too long; wherefore not join Don Sanchez openly and at once?"

"All is not yet ripe for such a purpose," said Gonsalez: "when Algarva rises, then do we throw off the mask, and

draw the sword, but not till then: we have intelligence that renders such a plan necessary and imperative."

"Well," said the Talba, as he stood musing for a moment, leaning on his cimeter, that he had not yet returned to its sheath, "you know your own plans; for myself, to-morrow I go where I hope to lend effectual aid. I like not your delay; you work like the earth-worm in the dark; keep a smooth face to Alonso; haunt the court, whilst you hold intelligence fatal to his interests with those who are openly his foes. You call this wisdom, a wary practice of your state intrigues; I deem it dangerous to yourselves, and wanting in that hardihood which should accompany a great cause."

"And if we do this, for whose injury do we toil?" said Gonsalez: "was not Alonso thy foe? was it not Don Pedro who seized on thy Moorish master, Alcanzor? did not Alonso doom him to death? and do not we deal with the king after the lesson he has himself taught us? Have you forgot his cruel policy, Talba?"

Hassan started from his fixed position at these words. "Can I forget it, think you?" he exclaimed: "can I forget that which is written in characters of fire on my soul, that burns for just requital of these wrongs? I live but for this cause. As well could the heavens change the word of Him whose high purposes they proclaim, as I could change my deep devotion to requite the ruin of my fallen prince. To-morrow I depart; to-morrow shall the Moorish hosts rise as the flood that lifts up its mountain waves to spread abroad destruction. The bristling spear, the bow, bent on swift death, these shall speak the Moorish spirit, and thy enemies and mine shall be laid low in the dust, though now they stand high as the eagle's nest."

"Fail not, Talba," said Gonsalez, "to send intelligence of thy purpose to our friends in Algarva. Much depends on it."

"I will not fail, unless life fails," replied Hassan. "For never will I be satisfied, till I have the blood of him who slew Alcanzor."

As the Talba spoke, there was in his countenance a calmer expression than generally accompanied those bursts of indignant feeling that the mention of the murdered Alcanzor never failed to call forth. But it was the calmness of a lofty mind, the grandeur of whose purpose raised it far above the turbulent passions of a blind and feverish revenge. Hassan was a follower of the Mahometan law; he was not, therefore, to be judged by the standard of christian virtue, or even of christian

faith, as it was then understood in those times of error. With him, to sacrifice his fortunes, his personal comforts, and even his life, to destroy the murderer of his prince, was an act of justice more than of vengeance, and he looked on its accomplishment as fulfilling the dictates of that great Being whose high behests he fancied he could trace, in the hours of his enthusiastic studies, to be written in signs visible alone to the eye of the sage as he contemplated the heavens and its hosts of resplendent worlds.

The Talba at length retired, no longer fearing Donna Ines de Castro could be exposed to the danger of pursuit. No sooner was he gone than Gonsalez and Diego once more held a secret and brief conference. The result of this it will be our task to relate in a future chapter. Whatever might be the resolution they adopted, they lost no time in setting forth to execute it.

Of the Talba we may here state, in addition to what is already known to the reader, that he had gained the confidence of Peter the Cruel during a secret embassy from the oppressed Moors; and it is most likely, whilst so employed, he learned from that prince the intentions of Don Diego to return, under the garb of a pilgrim, into Portugal, for the purpose of forwarding the plans of Don Sanchez. We have already seen in what manner he used such knowledge of these intentions to act on the mind of the irresolute Diego, when an accident, favourable to the Talba's designs, threw the banished nobleman in his way, on the evening he sought shelter beneath the roof of Aza Anzurez. The Moors, indeed, had secret intelligencers wherever they hoped to find partisans, amongst the oppressed, the disaffected, or the more open enemies of Alonso.

CHAPTER XVII.

> Yet famine,
> Ere clean it o'erthrow nature, makes it valiant:
> Plenty and peace breed cowards; hardness ever
> Of hardiness is mother.
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

THE progress of our narrative now obliges us to return to the fortress of Death, where it will be remembered we left Aza Anzurez and Hamet, in company with some few Moors and Christians, to maintain that stronghold for Don Sanchez. For some days all remained quiet, without the slightest appearance that any hostile attempt would be made on the fortress to disturb it. This would most likely have continued, but for a circumstance which drew upon it the attention of the enemy.

Don John of Almeria, who had quitted the mountains with Don Sanchez, having in one of those minor actions, so common during this civil broil, fiercely encountered the master of the Wing, was at length worsted, the greater number of his men slain, himself severely wounded, and compelled to fly for his life, attended by a few surviving followers, to seek a last shelter in the fortress of Death. Thither he was pursued, and the enemy, on his refusal to surrender, resolved to subdue this stronghold of the mountains by storm or escalade. The little garrison prepared for resistance. The master of the Wing encamped his men in a small valley which opened from the narrow ravine, and effectually cut off all succours, should any attempt be made to reach the castle by the only practicable road.

There were wild and mountain tracks that led to the small level spot on which the fortress stood; but these were scarcely more than sufficient to afford a footing to the wild animals that sported on the crags of the rocks, and were not likely to offer a communication for supplies of men or arms to the garrison. As it is not the design of this work to describe the mode of mountain warfare at the period of our tale, we pass in silence many attempts that were made to force surrender. Still the castle held out valiantly; and protected by its strong battlements and towers, had lost but few men, whilst the archers, from their loopholes, picked out and slew many a brave captain amongst the besiegers.

By one of those mountain tracks we have just mentioned, a man belonging to the garrison, at the hazard of his neck, had undertaken to pass, and to carry intelligence of its distress, to implore such aid from friends as could be sent, ere necessity compelled a surrender. The master of the Wing was bent on subduing it. He had sworn by his holy order, that if only for the sake of example, he would hang out over its battlements the head of the traitor Don John, of Hamet, and of the Moorish princess (such was Aza called), who had more than once boldly parleyed from the ramparts, defied the Christian hosts, and, like an Amazon of old, with a bow in her hand, by exhortation and example, inspired her people to hold out to the last. A time of terror and of danger, like that of death, is a great leveller of all distinctions. So was it proved in the Prior of Evora, who still remained in the fortress. Though holding the Moors in utter abhorrence, whilst he could sleep in his bed without alarm, yet the danger which now threatened from without operated greatly in their favour. Relying much also on the vigorous defence made by the Moors, a people accustomed to all kinds of mountain warfare, the Prior was particularly anxious to keep up their hearts, as he well knew that if driven to surrender, hated as he was by Alonso, not even his holy character would obtain him the hope of mercy.

It was once, towards the close of the day, during this perilous siege, that the churchman retired to a small turret which he occupied in the castle; and where, we will suppose, he employed his time in looking up to heaven, in many prayers for deliverance. Certain it is, he tired his eyes in gazing amongst the mountain tops, which rose in all directions around him, in the hope to espy, amidst their wild and craggy paths, a moving speck that might indicate the return of the scout who had so daringly ventured to convey intelligence, promising to bring the glad tidings of hope should he obtain them.

The bridge we before noticed, thrown across from summit to summit amid the rocks that overhung the torrent, was still left standing, as, though it might in some measure endanger the garrison, remained, nevertheless, the only means by which any of them could pass into the mountains. True was it that none but a hunter, or a hardy mountaineer, could dare venture upon these tracks without the certainty of losing his life in the attempt. The Prior more than once had himself cast a longing eye upon them, as the only probable mode of his

escape; but, accustomed as he was to comfort and good fare, he had seldom trod any road but that which led to the court or to his monastery. He felt that to ascend the winding stairs of his turret tried his breath. How then could he hope to adventure amidst paths which led through cloud and chasm? He assuredly must perish in them before he could find a place to hide his head in safety, to say nothing of falling alive into the hands of his enemies, if he escaped the dangers of the mountains.

It was with a sinking heart that the Prior long watched in vain, and saw nothing but cloud after cloud roll and break away amidst the peaks of the rocks, to leave them glittering in light. Naught else, indeed, moved over their stern fronts, except that at intervals an eagle would dart from some cleft amid these precipices, and rise on soaring wing, whilst her screams were heard even above the noise of the torrent, that fell thundering to the depths below, and was lost to the eye amid the secret hollows and caverns of the earth. Above was the air-hung bridge, awhile enveloped in mist and vapour, and anon appearing like a dark and slender line against a clear blue sky; here and there broken by the dazzling peak of a mountain capped with eternal snows.

As the Prior withdrew his weary eye from gazing on these objects, the door of the little turret opened, and a tawny head was thrust in without any previous ceremony. "What would you here, Moor?" said the Prior, in a most disconsolate tone. A like intrusion on the holy man's privacy would, probably, a few days before, have cost the Moslem a sharp reproof, with a roll down the turret steps to boot; but sorrow and fear are great humblers of spiritual as well as worldly pride.

"Holy father of the Christians," answered Cassim, for Cassim it was who intruded, "I am come to you from the wounded man, Don John of Almeria. He is even now dragging himself off his sick bed, and craves your attendance in the hall, at the conference of the defenders of the fortress."

"The conference!" exclaimed the Prior; "alas! what conference? Men in our situation should betake themselves to prayer, seeing no arms, but spiritual ones, are like to avail us: the scout makes no return."

"And if he did return," said Cassim, "what would that avail? Holy father," continued the Moor, with an arch look, as he rolled his large eyes, shewing the whites of them in full contrast to his dusky complexion; "holy father, I, as you know, am keeper of the stores, and I will entrust to your

reverend discretion a secret. There is not two days' provision left in the garrison! I have not dared say as much to the men-at-arms, lest it should make them faint-hearted before the succours arrive. After two days the horses, that now feed on a little chopped straw—the very dogs, unclean animals though they be, must be killed for food, or we starve."

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed the Prior: "O that the days of miracle would come again! Had we but the image of our Lady of Pity, that stands in my church at Evora, I doubt not that, at the presence of such a sweet image, these hard rocks would yield us bread."

"Nay, now," cried Cassim, "with reverence be it spoken to the virgin Sultana of the Nazarenes, I doubt it much; since you have daily told us how soon your prayers would procure bread for us all. For myself, though I have held the key, yet have I fasted more than ever did one of thy own hermits; and I hold myself acquitted on that score for the next Ramadam. But one thing goes to my very heart, when I see the havoc which hunger has made in the noble Hamet. He has denied himself the bread necessary to sustain his very being; has hoarded in secret his own scanty allowance, that his mother, who of late has shewn signs of sickness from want, might be preserved alive; the youth, good Prior, has death in his hollow cheek. He is thin and meagre as the famished wolf, and yet retains its fierceness for his enemies. In this weak condition, the sally he meditates this very evening must end fatally: he will fall before the well-fed Christian hosts. It is for this I seek you; and for this, Prior, do I trust you with a knowledge of the starvation that is in store for you."

"I thank you for the confidence, good Moor," said the Prior, with a groan. "But what mean you by this sally? What will that avail? To be sure, by a few of the garrison being cut off, the number of mouths will be lessened; so that what is left of food may hold out till the succours arrive."

"Cut off!" exclaimed Cassim. "The noble Hamet, and his gallant Moors, cut off! Why, it is in the hope to obtain us bread, that they meditate, by rushing down the defile, to cut their way through the enemy's camp. If they succeed, their Moorish lances, like thy miraculous image of the Lady Virgin, may possibly turn into barley loaves to save us from death. It is for this that Hamet would sally forth, and for this does he need something to give warmth to his heart, and strength to his arm, ere he adventures upon it."

"The God of battles, I doubt not, will give him both,"

replied the Prior; "for, Moor though he be, he fights in a Christian cause. I will pray for him, Cassim; I will so deal with the holy St. Francis, that he shall not have peace in heaven itself until he helps us. Hamet is sure of my orisons."

"Nay," said Cassim, with a grin that shewed his ivory teeth in rivalry to the white around his full black eyes; "nay, good father, thou wilt confer on him another sort of benefit, I trust, before he adventures forth."

"What mean you?" said the Prior. "Thou wilt not ask me to lend to an infidel, brave though he be, my reliquary to guard his person? my tooth of St. Ursula, nor my nails of the blessed St. Jerome, nor my jawbone of Balaam's ass? They are sacred things, that must not go into Moslem hands; it were blasphemy to think of it."

"Holy Prior," said Cassim, with a second grin, "I heard you preaching the other day to the Christians all about that story of the prophet Balaam and his ass; and I will even read to you your own lesson from it."

"What lesson?" cried the Prior; "I am a churchman, good dog Moor; and though I now condescend to talk to you in this hour of need, and ——"

"Mark me," continued Cassim, interrupting him, with a determined voice and manner; "didst thou not say, that 'If Allah speak to thee, as he did to Balaam by the mouth of an ass, thou must have so much of patience as to hearken to him?' Therefore, let me be Moor or ass, thou shalt hear me, when I tell thee, Prior, that thou, as a priest, as a man, art bound, in mercy to a fellow-creature, to open thy secret hoard here, behind thy moveable oratory, and to give some of the bread and wine it contains so amply, to sustain the falling strength of Hamet, ere he sallies forth this night to do battle. Thou shalt not keep it all to fill thy own stomach, when thou canst do nothing but pray, and Hamet must away to fight."

"I—I—a secret store!" stammered out the Prior; "I hoard bread and wine for my own use, when the garrison are starving! I don't know what you mean ——"

"Word for word what I say," replied Cassim: "I am not deceived. Have I not marked thee, Prior, closely marked thee? Whilst Moor and Christian, by the scanty allowance doled out to them day after day, have grown thin, weak, and miserable, like animals that pine after their lost young, I have seen thee keep thy sleek cheek unchanged, thy good comfortable flesh unwasted, and thy chin, lips, and nose, as ruddy as the pips of a pomegranate. Thy voice is full, and thy laugh

strong as that of the hyæna. Wherefore comes this? I say that thou hast some secret store, or thou too wouldst pine away; for flesh and blood live not upon the air of this turret, which is more likely to sharpen appetite than to satisfy it."

"Thou art deceived, Moor, grossly deceived by thy infidel ignorance," said the Prior. "Thou lackest knowledge of the Christian faith to understand this thing. It is a miracle, good Moor, a miracle that hath its example in Holy Writ; for know ye, Elijah the prophet went forty days without food. Also learn that those children of the promise, Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, throve, and had faces as shining and as full as a harvest moon, though they ate but pulse and drank but fair water in the house of bondage. I thrive in the like way, being, as you know, a priest dedicated to the holy, catholic, apostolic, and universal see of Rome. For whom, think ye the blessed Lady Mary, and the tender St. Francis, will work miracles now-a-days, if it be not for such a son of the church as I am?"

"Holy Father," said Cassim, "how much then did I mistake thee, just now, when thou didst cry out and groan in alarm at the thoughts of thy own starvation, unless succours arrived to us. Thou didst wish that the days of miracle would come again, and most especially didst thou desire that thou hadst here thy old black image of the Lady Mary of Evora, that she might turn some of these hard granite rocks into barley loaves and kid's flesh. If thou canst live by miracles, I, who am master of the stores, need not waste on thy unprofitable jaws another day's allowance. Farewell."

"Stay, Moor," cried the Prior; "if I thought that a portion of my small store—for a very small store, saved from my daily meagre allowance, I grant may possibly be remaining, which, like the widow's cruise of oil, hath not yet failed, as holy men are the especial care of miracle-working saints; why, I say, if I thought a cup of wine would hearten up young Hamet to give good blows, to get the garrison a supply of food, I might even trust such a draught to thy discretion in dealing it out to him."

"Give it me then," cried Cassim, "for the young sharif is faint for lack of nourishment; and wine will——"

"Wine!" exclaimed the Prior; "wine! Think again, good Moor; it is contrary to thy own prophet's law, clean against the conscience of a Moslem to drink wine. Think of the good of thy young master's soul."

"Tush, tush," said Cassim, "our law, like thy own, gives

place to necessity; and this is not a time to stand on trifles; and truly, holy man, this is the first occasion on which I ever heard you allow that a Moslem, like a Christian, had a conscience or any soul worth looking after, either for good or evil. Come, open thy heart to necessity, and shew some charity to a noble youth, though he be a Moor."

"Well, well, I will," said the Prior, as he fumbled in a pocket within the breast of his gown for a small key: "but be cautious, good Moor; blab it not, good Moor; for I would not have my left hand know the deeds of charity done by my right, its brother. And, if this were noised through the fortress, I should have all the hungry curs upon me at once; and may be, most of them being Moslem, and but of common natural virtue, the miracle might fail me; my supply of wine would be lacking, did it go down more infidel throats than one. Come, I will pour thee forth this cupful."

"Nay, give the whole jar rather," said Cassim: "I will ease thee of that burthen; and I see others peeping up their long necks like cranes. This one will not be found wanting. I will put it under my cloak: and give me a handful of those cakes to keep it company; since wine, on a cold empty stomach, is apt to make hot work in the brain instead of the heart. Thou wilt join the conference in the hall? Thanks, priest; I will not betray thy hiding-hole so long as thou wilt not let Aza and the gallant sharif starve. This shall give him strength for the sally."

So saying, Cassim, though he was himself as meagre as a man just risen from a wasting fever, with the utmost care and caution descended the winding stairs, without thinking of his own wants. He dropped a portion of the cakes in his way down: it was covered with dust, yet he stopped and carefully picked it up. Nor would the faithful creature taste even this soiled morsel, lest he should subtract from the supplies he believed might be necessary for Aza and his dear young master.

The Prior locked up his little treasury, after taking something from it to cheer up his own heart in this hour of affliction. As he sighed and shook his head over the diminished long-necked jars of wine, some thought of old times wafted him in imagination back to the well filled cellars of Evora; for he muttered to himself, "It is a royal foundation, and your royal foundations have ever the best wine. What a fool was I to meddle in this quarrel! But Alonso, whom I hate as I do the devil, gave me dog-wages for all my services, and

humbled me before the Pope. And then came ambition, like the beautiful woman in the temptation of St. Anthony, so that, unless blessed with powers of resistance equal to that saint's, flesh and blood could not withstand it. But once let me get my head out of this cursed old castle—St. Francis forgive the sin of a stray oath!—for, like a nest in a rock, it is a habitation more fit for birds than men; and if ever I get into such a difficulty again, why, ambition shall first assure me of an abbey by way of recompense for the hazard." And, with this resolution, the Prior descended to the hall of conference.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Go to the rude ribs of that ancient castle;
Through brazen trumpet send the breath of parle
Into his ruined ears—and thus deliver.

What, will not this castle yield?
—— The castle royally is mann'd, my lord,
Against thy entrance.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE hall presented a melancholy scene to the Prior as he entered: gaunt famine was in the face of every one assembled. The Christians' fairer colour was changed to a haggard paleness, like that of death: and the Moors looked terrific, for their eyes seemed starting from their sockets, with the desperation of starving men; whilst their tawny features partook of a yellow and black colour, that shewed the unhealthy state to which they were reduced by want.

Don John of Almeria, weak, wounded, subdued by necessity, and still unable to bear his arms, looked more like a spirit of the restless dead, risen to earth and again embodied, than as a living man. He bore his state of incapacity for action with impatience; and, as if more jealous of power now that he was unable to assert it, he assumed the command in a tone and manner that shewed, even in this hour of peril, he would yield to none as lord of the fortress.

Aza Anzurez, who, like many Moorish women of the period, deemed it unworthy her high birth, and higher resolution, to give way to female weakness in such a time of danger, stood with a bow in her hand. She had before now acted an Amazonian part under similar circumstances, and her courage rose with the occasion that rendered its exertions necessary. Her stately figure seemed, as she stood in mute attention, taller than usual; and though her cheek was wasted, her countenance had lost nothing of its energy. Hamet was also present, clad in the light armour common to the Moors, which protected only the back and breast: it was, in fact, a short coat of mail; he wore a steel bacinet beneath the folds of his turban; a light buckler of leather was on his left arm, and in his right hand a small lance. The flesh upon his limbs seemed wasted, but the muscles were as marked as ever; and though

the havoc made by want was painted in rigid characters in his face, his eye retained its wonted fire.

His followers, armed, ready to obey the voice of their leader, stood near him in profound silence; yet, to judge from their dark and stern looks, it was a silence like that which precedes a thunder-storm; a portent that, when it bursts, it will be terrible.

At the moment the Prior entered, Don John was addressing the young sharif: "Brave Hamet, did not my ill fortune, which keeps me here more like the wounded hart couching for safety, than the eager hound that follows the track of blood, I would bear you company. Yet, if you act warily, as well as boldly, the sally you are about to make may obtain us the succours so vital to our hopes. You may pass the defile, and avoid the camp in the plain, whilst our enemies, surprised by an attempt as daring as it is unexpected, may not be in readiness to offer any let to your purpose. Yet the danger is extreme."

"Not greater, Don John," replied Hamet, "than the necessity. I am ready to risk it; and these, my hardy followers, to share it. If it be the will of Allah, this night shall give relief to your distressed people: or, if not, Hamet shall fall: he has but one life, nor can it be lost in a better cause. The noble Don Sanchez, and you, Don John, received us when we were like the wanderers of the desert, with no home, no place of rest. I would prove that I am not ungrateful: the occasion offers, and I obey the call to arms." Hamet turned to his followers: "Moslems, you are bound with me, your leader, the son of Alcanzor, on an action for life or death. This night maintain the honour of the Moorish banner. In your hands are cimeters of steel: let them be terrible to your enemies. But if you fall, remember that as you shall now use them, they will be to you the keys of heaven or hell; for so, the prophet Mahomet deems the sword."

"Thy spirit is noble, brave youth," said Don John. "But for these accursed wounds, that keep me within stone walls, like a bedridden monk, I would stand by thy side for life or death. Yet I fear thy courage soars above thy years and strength."

"Fear him not, Sir Knight," said the Prior, who held himself bound to say something by way of encouragement: "Hamet may achieve great things; for a bold heart is a good buckler. And then, what though he be young, and an infidel to boot, why, truly, heaven can make use of vile things to great

ends. Nay, as to the matter of his youth, we know David was young—"

"When he slew Jalut,"* said Hamet, interrupting the Prior. "The God of battles made the shepherd's sling mighty as a bow of steel against the giant's force. I will not fear. Farewell, my mother. If I fall, Don John, shew some pity for the widowed Aza."

"Think not of me, Hamet," said Aza, "but rather of that cause which calls thee from my side. If Don Sanchez prospers, if you obtain relief that we may hold out this castle as a place of shelter in the hour of his need, that generous prince has promised to redress the wrongs of our people. Think not, then, of me; for, if Hamet falls, what were all this world to Aza? The hour of thy fate would be to her as that awful hour which shall proclaim the coming desolation of the earth; when the living, as he passes by another's grave, shall say, as he looks upon the sod, 'Would to God I were in thy place!' Think not of me: or, if thou dost, let it be to tell thy heart that Aza's date of life is with that of her son; one hour, one fate. Yet, stay, I will gird on thee thy father's sword, as I would bid thee emulate his daring spirit."

"I will not disgrace it, mother," said Hamet, as he looked tenderly upon Aza ,who bound round his waist a richly embroidered girdle, from which depended the Moorish cimeter of her Alcanzor. "Oh! that I were more worthy to draw its trenchant blade," he added, as he placed his hand upon the hilt. "If I return not by to-morrow, ere the setting sun lengthens the shadows of the mountains, say that Hamet is summoned to give up his dread account by the black and livid angels of death. You hold out the fortress, Don John, to the last?"

"Ay," replied the Christian knight, "till famine, lean and miserable in itself, shall banquet on us all. We are all present; we have but one resolution, Moor and Christian. Let us swear never to yield this fortress whilst the last pulse of life beats in our veins. Let us swear."

The solemn tone in which this was spoken, the enthusiasm of a bold spirit that kindled even the wan cheek of Don John, seemed to animate the assembly, and one deep chorus of voices echoed his resolution through the hall, as they exclaimed, "We swear."

"Are we all prepared for a last defence within the walls?" inquired Don John. "Are the arbalists ready to man the ramparts should we be assailed ere the succours arrive that

* Goliah is called Jalut in the Koran.

Hamet may procure for us? Let the men who guard the gateway have at hand stones, together with lead and pitch, to pour it boiling on the heads of our assailants; for if they come, it shall be to meet a warm welcome at our gates. Let nothing be wanting to make it such. Hamet, thou wilt sally forth anon?"

"I go, Christian knight," said Hamet; "I wait but till the shadows of evening fall on rock and plain, that we may with greater safety descend the mountain pass, unseen by our enemies. They will not think we would venture to tread it save in the light of day."

"I will counsel thee how to act, youth," said Don John. "Here, sit thee down by me, and listen. My experience may aid thee, who have none. Mark well my counsel." Hamet did so with deep attention, whilst the rest of the garrison hastened to fulfil the commands of Don John.

It was towards evening when Aza Anzurez stationed herself on the ramparts of the watchtower, as she looked with anxious eyes on the windings of the narrow defile in the mountains; for Hamet and his chosen band were about to sally forth; nor had the youth trusted himself with a last adieu to his mother. He feared to awaken any feelings that should inspire one tender thought at such a crisis.

To a mind fraught with anxious hopes and fears, all things appear with a face that corresponds to its own feelings. To a mother's eye the fear of evil often becomes certainty, and hope itself looks sickly when she scarcely dares to cherish it for a beloved son. Even the heroic Aza felt this, as her eye wandered over the surrounding scene. All was melancholy. The dusky twilight allowed the mountains to be distinguished only in the grandeur of their outline, and in their lofty shadows. These, dark, towering, and wild in their forms, looked, to the imagination of the Moor, like so many of those terrific and evil genii, which, by her faith, she was taught to believe, though created of fire, partook of the gross nature of earth, and were subject to final death and doom when their destructive mission on mankind should be fulfilled. The moaning of the winds, that sounded drearily through tower and turret, came upon her ear like the voice of a complaining spirit of air. The silence, the deep repose of the far-stretched plain below, was unbroken, save by the torrent that murmured as it now darkly fell amid its abyss of rocks and shadows. Though the scene was awful, yet was it suited to the deep, solemn, and energetic feelings that swelled in the bosom of

Aza. As Hamet sallied forth, she raised her hands to heaven, and mentally devoted her son to do the will of Him who makes the bow and the spear, like the elements of lightning and of tempest, the instruments of His almighty hand.

She saw Hamet sally from beneath the portal of the fortress of Death, perhaps to meet the king of terrors ere night had closed upon the towers that bore the destroyer's name. She watched him and his little band, as they passed, in profound silence, the level spot on which the fortress stood. Her eye followed him down the rugged path of the narrow defile, till an opening in the rising rocks seemed to receive him within its hollow womb. Aza looked again; the last Moor passed under its deep shade, and then not a living creature was seen in those paths where her son had so lately trod. She left her station, descended into the castle-hall, and endeavoured to summon that courage to her aid which would enable her to bear the result, whatever it might be, as became the daughter, the widow, and the mother of a prince.

Hamet, in the interval, marched silently forward, as it was the purpose of the Moors to endeavour to pass the camp that led to the opposite extremity of the valley. The attempt was a daring one, and such as could only be excused by the desperate circumstances which induced the youthful sharif, at the risk of life itself, to seek Don Sanchez, and procure relief for the garrison. As the attempt was sudden and unexpected, there was hope it might succeed; yet hope itself changed to desperation, when, as Hamet and his band cleared the dangerous pass, and prepared to rush into the plain, a sudden shout, loud, deafening, and continued, "The wing for the cross!" burst upon his ear, as from a hundred throats. In another moment, Hamet found himself hemmed in by a band of Christians, who most likely, by some scout, had obtained intelligence of his sally, and stood, concealed from observation by a projecting portion of the rocks, ready to receive the devoted Moors at a spot where they could neither go forward nor retreat.

The action which followed was so brief, that it passed like the bursting of a thunder-cloud, whose lightnings are felt as soon as seen. Yet though brief, it was fearful. Hamet shouted the war-cry of his people, and not a Moor but rushed on death, striking down an enemy at each blow of desperation. The love, that even in these dreadful moments, they felt for their young chief, for a while preserved him from his fate. The Moors rallied round their leader: they fell upon the Christian

host, body to body, as their very armour clashed and rung in the shock, like vessels driven against each other by the fury of the waves. Moor bore down Christian, and Christian bore down Moor, till their dying bodies made a rampart for their living friends and breathing foes. Wild war-cries, curses, poured on the assailants, and the shoutings for the cross, mingled with the groans of the dying; and as sword and lance clashed, or struck fire in the encounter, the reckless manner in which the Moors engaged shewed them bent on death, as they exulted in shedding that blood which should be as a sacrifice for their own.

Amid the tumult, the darkness, and horror of the hour, Hamet saw follower after follower fall by his side, till he stood almost alone, encompassed by enemies, like dogs that pursue the hunted deer, and rush at his throat, increasing in number as he fails in strength. Hamet stood alone. His lance had been broken, and he now wielded his father's sword with the last efforts of his strength, yet with a courage and a hardihood that shewed the gallant race from whom he drew his breath. He rushed forward; terror followed his steps, and death was in his arm, as he raised it to encounter the master of the Wing, who was conspicuous by his dress, and known to be the leader. The count observed the daring conduct of the young Moor, and bent on making him prisoner, called aloud to his people, that they should spare him, at the very moment that more than one glittering steel was raised to fell him to the earth.

Hamet heard the command; and driven to desperation by the dreadful slaughter of his band, he cried aloud, "Death, death; give me death: no mercy. I will never yield to thee, Christian knight. I know thee, thou art the Count of Amiranti. It was thy arm that helped to destroy our people in Algarva. I will provoke thee to give me the only mercy I would ask of thee—death. Thou or I must fall and bite the dust."

The Moor, as he spoke, rushed forward, and encountered again the master of the Wing; for some moments the Christians looked on, as they would at a tournament, restrained by the cries of the count, that they should not slay Hamet. The combat was rapid and decisive. Hamet in these moments gave proof of that dexterity of hand, agility of limb, and watchfulness of eye, for which the Moors were so celebrated in warfare; but he had not the temperate courage, nor the strength of his opponent, who, scarcely moving from his sta-

tion, kept, as it were, at bay the assaults and rapid movements of the Moor. Hamet now aimed a blow at his head. It was parried, but yet sent forth sparks of light. Again he aimed at the joints of the armour of his enemy, who suddenly changed the attack, when he perceived the young sharif's strength was nearly spent; for by one bold act, he rushed on him with open arms, grasped him round the body, and threw him to the ground. A shout from the Christian host proclaimed the victory.

Hamet looked up, tore open the shirt of mail that covered his breast, and said in a voice, whose calm tone was at this moment more impressive than that of the wildest passion, "Christian, why dost thou delay to strike?"

The master of the Wing gave him no answer; and speaking aside to his people, they instantly raised Hamet from the earth as their prisoner. Another brief parley took place, and a messenger was despatched to the camp with intelligence of what had happened. He speedily returned, bearing with him what was the usual appendage of slavery to the Moors who became captives in battle—chains for the hands and feet.

"Moor!" said the master of the Wing, "I know thee. Thy life is doubly forfeited to the law, though it has been spared in battle. Thou art Hamet, banished, on pain of death, from this kingdom of Portugal, by Alonso the Brave. Dost thou see these chains?"

"My eyes," Hamet replied, "rest on yonder pile of my brave band who died for me. Thy words speak sooth. I have broken my banishment; I was in arms against Alonso; give me, then, death. It shall be more welcome than slavery, of which thy manacles of iron are but a cold figure. Let my body be the last on this fallen heap."

"Thou art young and brave," said the master of the Wing: "I will give thee a chance to escape the disgraceful death that must else await thee in these irons. Wilt thou hear me?"

"I cannot choose but hear thee," replied Hamet, "seeing I cannot escape thy presence or these bonds."

"Give up," said the master of the Wing, "whatever is known to you of the plans, the movements, and the forces of Don Sanchez, the rebel Bastard of Portugal. Conduct our people, under cover of night, to yonder fortress in the jaws of the mountain; pass them into it, as thy own band returned from this mad exploit, and thou shalt be rewarded as well as saved alive."

Hamet looked up at the master of the Wing with a countenance in which contempt was written in the strongest characters. "Think you," said he, as his deep feelings of indignation would scarcely allow him to reply articulately—"think you that the sight of these chains can render me a slave in soul as well as body? Know, if my arm were free, and thou and I stood face to face, my sword should tear from thy breast the false heart that dares thus judge of mine. Here are my hands," he held them forth as he spoke: "bind on them thy base chains. Torture me; do with me as do thy priests by the renegade Christians; throw me into a pit of glowing fire; make me thy slave, thy scorn, a menial for the vilest offices of life; do this, or anything thou wilt, but do not insult my misery by thinking I would listen to become a traitor."

"Chain the infidel slave," said the master of the Wing: "that part of his desire is granted; and death shall be his portion ere the sun again lights up mountain and valley, if what I am now about to do fails. Follow me, comrades, I go to summon to a parley the rebel fortress of Death."

Such was the result of the unfortunate Hamet's bold attempt to obtain relief for the partisans of Don Sanchez within the garrison. These anxiously awaited the doubtful issue of his adventure. Not long were they held in suspense, for the guard from the watch-tower gave notice that he saw a great glare of light, as from a hundred torches carried by armed men, who were winding up the mountain towards the fortress.

In a few minutes every man within the castle was at his post, ready to obey the call of danger. Don John of Almeria, sick and wounded as he was, hastened to the walls; and Aza, anxious for her son, whose idea she instantly connected with this advancing party, also followed the steps of the commander. Don John soon perceived that those who advanced were a Christian band; and knew by the banner they bore, as the light of the torches gleamed upon it, that they were of the order of the Wing, and servants of the king. Yet it also appeared that they came with no hostile purpose, since a white flag of truce, borne even before the royal banner, dispelled all apprehensions of an immediate contest. As they drew nearer, and the glare of so many torches shone on the glittering armour of the knights of the Wing, their warlike strength was little calculated to dispel the alarms of a handful of starving men, though within the walls of so strong a fortress.

About the centre of the hostile band was seen a prisoner, heavily chained, and conducted between two men-at-arms,

one of which held, as in triumph, a torn and bloody banner, which the keen eye of Aza instantly saw to be that of the Moors. Too soon did she recognise in the prisoner her unhappy son. An involuntary cry burst from her lips: it was drowned in the loud notes of the trumpet, as they rung and echoed from tower and rock, summoning a parley before the gates of the castle; whilst, at the same moment, a flag of truce was unfurled, and placed before the Count of Amiranti.

Don John of Almeria was already on the walls of one of the flanking towers: he looked down with an eye of impatience and indignation as the herald of the Wing thus addressed him: "In the name of Alonso the Brave, king of Portugal, lord of Algarva, of Codycera, and of Braga; Joseph, Count of Amiranti, and master of the most holy and military order of the Wing, doth, by the authority of the king, summon this castle, now under command of Don John of Almeria, most traitorously and rebelliously in league against his lawful prince, to open its gates, and to lay down his rebel arms, and to yield both himself and all who are within, prisoners at the discretion and according to the pleasure of the said Count of Amiranti; so to be dealt with as he, in his wisdom and in his power, shall deem just and fitting, for the glory of God, the honour of the king, and the loyalty of that holy order of which he is chief and master. And as you, Don John of Almeria, shall answer this summons for weal or woe, so be it, in the name of the holy St. Michael, the Lady Virgin of heaven, and all saints.—Amen."

There was a dead pause. The Count of Amiranti advanced nearer the walls of the tower, that he might distinctly hear the answer given to the summons of his herald. Don John looked down upon him, from between the battlements where he stood, and replied: "Thus do I, John of Almeria, answer thy summons, master of the Wing, in the name of the most noble prince Don Sanchez of Codycera, for whom I maintain this fortress. I disclaim the appellation of traitorous, or rebellious; since I am in arms for a matter of just right, wrested from Don Sanchez by his tyrant brother. Bid your king restore the lands he has unjustly seized of Codycera; bid him take off that odious process of outlawry he has passed against the honourable Bastard of Portugal; bid him remove the doom of death passed on the friends of Don Sanchez, and restore both them and him to their just rights, as free and honourable men. Bid Alonso do this, and these gates shall open to him as to their king. Failing in this, know, Count of Amiranti, there is but one way to unbar our gates, by force of arms: try their

strength, if thou wilt, this night. We will defend them till, man by man, we fall on these battlements. Such is our answer; we will give no other."

"Yet, think again, Don John," said the master of the Wing: "your men are in ill plight to hold out a defence thus desperate. Surrender while you may, and hope for mercy. Maintain this obstinate denial, and we have a vow in heaven, that may not be broken; we have sworn that, on subduing thy walls, thy own head, with the heads of all those who support thee, shall hang out upon them, a blackened prey for the mountain eagles. Wilt thou surrender?"

"Never," cried Don John. "Thy own eagle," he continued, pointing to the banner of Alonzo, whose device was that bird, "thy own eagle must tower above our walls ere we yield thee one inch of these stubborn stones, unless it be to build thy tomb withal. Master of the Wing, attack us, and, may be, we will yet clip thy own wing; or change its azure hue to that of the darkness of death."

"We are not here," said the Count, "to bandy words with thee, Don John, or to play upon their import. Now, hear our last proposal, which, possibly, will move thee;" and, turning to his own men, he commanded the prisoner to be brought forward. As Hamet, unhelmed, manacled, pale, and covered with the blood of his enemies, yet undaunted in look and carriage, stood before the gateway of the fortress, an involuntary feeling of horror chilled all present; for too well did they guess his danger and his fate.

If such could be the general feeling for the noble youth, what was that of his mother, of the unhappy Aza, as she looked upon her last earthly hope, in her son, thus, in the vigour of life and manhood, a prey to the spoiler, a sacrifice within the unfeeling hands of those who, by their religious vows, were sworn to extirpate the followers of Mahomet from the face of the earth. Her heart sunk within her, her head became dizzy, and a mist passed over her eyes, dimming their sight, as she gazed on this terrific scene. Despair possessed her soul; and covering her face with her hands, she sunk her arms upon the rampart against which she leaned, endeavouring to shut out all external objects, and to call up in her mind that high resolution which was the pride, the test, the glory of Moorish virtue even in woman.

"Dost thou know this boy?" said the master of the Wing.

"Ay, truly, do I," replied Don John: "he is noble as well as brave; and, wounded as I am, wouldst thou grant me free

access from these walls, and a fair field, I would even now try the strength of my lance against thine in single combat, to deliver him out of thy hands. We hold our own lives of less value than that of yonder Moor. Shame be upon thee, master of the Wing, thus to manacle a generous enemy."

"The shame is thine, Don John," replied the Count, "who can thus support thy cause by calling in Moslem aid; but well do traitors and infidels consort together. There is, in the very sound of those two words, infamy. Hark thee, Don John, we speak not in vain when we speak in the name of the king. This boy is under doom of death, since he is found alive and within the realm of Portugal after the banishment passed on him by Alonso. Surrender, and I will crave him of the king as a prisoner at my own discretion: he shall live. Refuse this, hold out the fortress twenty and four hours longer, and he dies before your very walls; he dies a vile ignoble death: he shall hang like an infidel and a dog by the neck, till he be dead, whilst we storm your fortress until its towers shall fall tottering and crumbling about your ears. Such is our resolve: we swear it by the Wing of the blessed cross."

Aza started from her position; and, clasping her hands together, cried, in a frantic voice, "You will not do this? Spare him;—spare him! He is my son, my Hamet, the only child of a widowed mother's breast."

The Count heard her cry, and marked her gestures, as, by the glare of the torches, she appeared the terrific image of despair. "Thou art the mother of this youth!" said the Count, addressing himself to Aza. "I have heard of thy name and fame; it is the theme of vulgar tongues. Thou hast with thee many of thy Moorish people; if report speaks truth, they outnumber the Christians in this fortress. Moorish woman, if thou art a mother in nature as well as in name, do thou descend, thy band of infidels will support thee; throw abroad these gates, and thy son lives! Do it now, or never think to look upon him more. I give thee no other choice: speak the word. Thy son—think of the charm that is in that name—thy son, woman! lives he, or must he die? Wilt thou open the gates?"

Aza at this moment seemed to recover all her self-possession, yet she spoke not, she moved not, scarcely did she seem to breathe; whilst her eye, the slight convulsion that passed over her noble features, all spoke the contest of her feelings. Her lips moved, but no sound came; her utterance had forsaken her, but not her high resolves, nor that virtue which, in

the Moorish mother, often emulated the stern and more than human greatness of a Roman matron.

She paused a moment, looked down upon Hamet, and then upon the Count; placed her hand upon her girdle, slowly drew from it a poniard, and hurling it down from the ramparts, so that it fell at the feet of the master of the Wing, she at length found utterance, and with a voice in whose wild accents there was a thrilling horror that pierced both ear and heart, exclaimed, "Give the boy death, I will not do this act of treachery."

Hamet looked exultingly upon the master of the Wing, as, pointing to the dagger that lay at his feet, he said, "Our Moorish mothers are not cowards; nor have their sons drawn with the milk of life other than noble feelings. I am prepared for death."

"Thou shalt suffer it," said the Count; "ay, by the very instrument given from a mother's hand."

Aza heard his words. She stood for a moment looking on Hamet in a manner that fixed all attention on herself. All feelings, whether of friend or foe, were with her alone; so great was the ascendency of her resolute mind, and the depth of her distress. Her figure was impressive; her hair, loose and disheveled, waved to the mountain winds; her dark eye had in it a gaze intense and frantic; it seemed to animate a countenance, every feature of which, like that of the antique Niobe, was fixed and rigid as marble in the expression of a grief too deep for words, too powerful long to suffer and to live. She looked again, raised her hands to heaven, then pressed them against her forehead, and rushed from the battlements.

A murmur of surprise, of sympathy, arose even from the band of the Count, as that stern leader, solemnly repeating the doom he had passed on Hamet, once more gave Don John the space of twenty-four hours to recant his denial of surrender. Don John refused even to answer this last offer of clemency; but hurling down his glove, in signal of defiance, he withdrew from the battlements, as the trumpet sounded the retreat of the men-at-arms for the night. They descended the defile, and bore Hamet, under sentence of death, a prisoner to the Christian camp.

CHAPTER XIX.

Pray you bid
These unknown friends to us, welcome.
SHAKSPEARE.

We pass in silence the horrors of that night which succeeded the fatal termination of Hamet's attempt to procure relief for the fortress. The grief of Aza was too powerful for words.

She was a Moor, descended from a long line of princes, whose glory it was to subdue all feeling, and to count even natural affection as nothing, when balanced against what was due to honour and to arms. Inured from her childhood to the wild life of mountain warfare, her mind had been familiarized to vicissitudes, to scenes of carnage and death. To be a chief to-day, and to-morrow a captive, to hear the shout of triumph in the morning, and the groan of the dying at night, were things that might shock, but could scarcely surprise, a daughter of the Moorish people; and though a mother, tender and affectionate, yet whilst Aza had nursed her son in her arms, she had looked forward to the hour when the infant hand that grasped her maternal bosom should one day wield the cimeter, as her Hamet followed in the glorious paths of his ancestors. Those very thoughts of tumult and of arms, that would have made pale the cheek of a Christian mother, gave a glow of exultation to that of the Moor, as she hoped for the hour when her boy should live or die in the cause of his father's wrongs. The religion of Mahomet, also, which had been spread with fire and sword, taught her to believe that all who perished in honourable battle were instantly conveyed to the paradise of the Faithful, where the rivers were whiter than silver, and more odoriferous than musk. Every heroic mind, therefore, deemed loss of life, under such promises, as a signal favour from heaven, a fate predetermined, written on the forehead of man.

It may likewise be observed that the Eastern nations and their immediate descendants, were remarkable for energetic expression both in speech and deed. Hence their love of figurative language, their suiting the action to the word, of

which Aza gave so striking an instance, when, impelled by feelings of the most impassioned kind, she threw the dagger at the feet of the Count of Amiranti, expressive of her resolution to prefer the death of her son to the commission of an act of treachery.

The character of Aza's mind might not inaptly be compared to those scenes in which the castle of Death towered amid the clouds; scenes stern, terrific, and too appalling to invite the timid or the weak to follow in their paths; yet was there sublimity in their very dangers: and, like the lofty and energetic feelings of Aza, they aspired as far above the common earth which lay smooth and crouching at their base, as did her mind above the ordinary character of woman.

Aza passed the night in her lone turret, and it was probable that even then she endeavoured to rally round her heart, the strong citadel of the human character, those firm thoughts and high resolves, which alone could repel the suggestions of despair. Sleep fled her pillow, and with restless anxiety she cast her eyes, from time to time, to the casement, wishing for, yet dreading, the morning light. She listened, scarce knowing wherefore, to the cry of the watch, as the sentinels were relieved on the walls. The heavy pace of the guard, the clash of arms, came on her ear with sad forebodings. The castle was still preserving a state of defence. Don John would not surrender, and Hamet must fall! Then would she recall what she deemed her better thoughts of duty, whilst tears dropped from her eyes, as tributes of nature to the feelings of a mother.

As she cast her weary eyes to the casement, she saw at length the first faint dawn of day. She arose and looked abroad, previous to pouring forth those orisons to the great Creator of earth and heaven, according to the forms enjoined every true Moslem, on beholding the rising sun. The purple and roseate tints of the morning had slowly dispelled the grey mists of dawn, and touched as with the wand of an enchanter every dark summit or rugged height; whilst the sun, like returning hope on the face of affliction, spread a lively glittering light over all that before was wrapt in the solemnity of night. As cloud after cloud rolled onward, gradually unfolding the blue and boundless ether, the more distant heights seemed to tremble in the morning light, whilst the mists arising from the earth, like a moving veil, floated before them.

Partial gleams of the sun fell on the turrets and battlements of the fortress, but the rocky defile that descended to the

plain was still in gloom and shadow. The torrent might now be seen from the castle, as one vast sheet of broad and dazzling foam. The little path, winding amid precipices (that very path by which the scout on a previous day had been in vain despatched to seek succours), appeared as though it were but a line drawn on the surface of dark and hanging rocks. Aza saw no moving object, either without or within the castle, except the night-watch on the ramparts, not yet relieved from his post. She quitted the window, and threw herself once more upon her couch, a prey to the sad forebodings of her own mind.

A noise at the door aroused her from these musings. She started up and hastened to unbar it. Cassim was there: his looks were wild and haggard; for he had known no rest either in mind or body since the dreadful scene before the gates on the previous night; yet there was a strange mixture of eager expectation in his expressions, as, slightly adverting to the subject of grief nearest Aza's heart, he hastily bade her look in the direction of the mountain-path, that led to the bridge we have before noticed.

"I have looked yonder, Cassim, already," said Aza, "till my eyes were dimmed and my heart sick within me; why should I look again? The day comes to light up the world, but there is no sun that will evermore arise to shed light and cheerfulness on the hopes of Aza. What dost thou gaze at thus earnestly.

"I see," replied Cassim, as he now stood watching from the casement, "I see glittering helmets and arms, that shine against the sides of yonder black precipice, like glowworms sparkling in the night. They must be bold men, whoever they be, to advance that way, since they must have crossed the plain; and, most likely, whilst our enemies were last night engaged with the noble sharif at the defile, or probably whilst the camp slept secure, not dreaming of yonder pass: it is, in fact, known but to the hardy mountaineers. Don John was right when he would not suffer yonder bridge, that looks like a black line extended from rock to rock, to be destroyed. Had the enemy been aware of the pass, those who now advance would have been cut off ere they climbed the precipice."

"Perhaps they are enemies," said Aza, as a cold shudder stole over her frame: "may be, they come once more to assail our resolution."

"Not so; I think other," replied Cassim: "for, had they

advanced from the camp, it would not have been by yonder pass. Look! look! I am sure it is the succours. Yet they are but a handful of men. See, they have mules with them, laden beasts of burden. I wonder how the creatures can keep footing on yon dizzy track; if they fall, there is not so much as a bush between them and a hundred cubits of the precipice. They will be dashed in pieces against the rocks, whose sides have peaks as hard and pointed as a spear. Allah guide them! they must bring us succours."

"Still to hold out the castle," said Aza; "and Hamet dies!"

Cassim placed his hand on his weapon, fixed his dark eye, with a peculiar expression, on Aza. She instantly read, and replied to the thoughts of his mind: "Thou wilt be the first to avenge his fall, brave Cassim. I commend thy purpose; but, alas! too well do I know, the blood of an enemy cannot, by its sacrifice, satisfy the mourning of the mother who is bereaved of her bosom's hope."

"I would, noble Aza," said Cassim, "that I had the tongue of Modhahabat, of the golden verses, that I might speak words of comfort to thy heart; but I am a rude follower of thy fallen fortunes, and I can give no comfort but by deeds such as come within the power of so mean a man as I am. Oh, that I had yonder master of the Wing within my grasp! I would deal with him as the Talba tells us Mockar doth by the wicked newly dead—batter his brains with an iron mace, that should make him cry out like a howling spirit till the last day. The last day! then Hamet, my gracious master, shall rise again with the good, seated on a white-winged camel, whose saddle is of gold; and the garden of the Faithful shall receive him. Think of that, as you are a sorrowing mother."

"I will endeavour to do so, Cassim," said Aza: "thy words are rude, yet they speak truth—where but in the hopes found in the Prophet shall Aza seek relief? For as in Mecca, Cassim, reverend imans tell us, there are no waters but what are bitter, saving the holy well of Zemzem, so are there no words which can be sweet to the soul of the afflicted, saving those which are poured from the fountain of God."

Aza turned to the window as she spoke, and could now plainly perceive glittering specks, as it were, that moved along the slender track which ascended the gigantic sides of the precipice. She saw also those dark atoms, for they looked no bigger in comparison with the surrounding objects, that the keener eye of Cassim had detected to be beasts of burden—

mules, since no other animal in the service of man could have ventured on such a pass. They advanced nearer and nearer, till at length they came within a hundred yards of the aerial bridge that crossed the torrent. "What is that," said Aza, "which looks so white on the back of the second mule? It seems like a human being: if it is so, it must be a woman."

"Allah forbid," replied Cassim: "we want mail coats and steel lances, supplies of food and arrows: we want no burdens to add to our weakness; and all women, noble Aza, are not brave as thou art, whose presence, like the Moorish banner, is the very rallying point of honour and gallant deeds. I will descend, and learn what Don John thinks of these adventurers. See! they cross the bridge: how they look as they pass over yonder frail line, no bigger than a mountain bird suspended between cloud and earth! Did but a breath of the wind blow as it did last night, it would scatter them from yonder hanging branch, like leaves that fall in an autumn day. See! the last mule, the last armed figure, has crossed in safety. I will descend, and bring you intelligence what these may be—friends to us, I think, by the perils they have encountered to reach yonder height. Take comfort, noble Aza: would that Cassim could give it you!"

He quitted the chamber, and descended. All the fortress was awaiting, in eager expectation, to know what might be those who now came towards the castle. Soon after, the party stood before the postern-gate. Don John of Almeria held a brief parley with a knight "clad in complete steel," who spoke to him in so low a voice, through a pierced aperture of the wicket, that no one heard what passed. Don John, however, appeared satisfied, as he commanded the postern-door to be opened immediately. The steel-clad knight was the first to pass within the walls; a second knight, equally shrouded in the glittering panoply of war, followed, and supported in his arms the delicate and fragile form of a woman closely veiled; who, either from terror arising from her late perils, from weakness, or both causes combined, seemed almost senseless. A boy followed her: he was handsome in person, richly dressed, but looked deeply dejected; and clung to the lady's side, though it was evident that a sense of terror kept him silent, as he stood trembling, and eyeing, by stolen glances, those who now received him. A few men-at-arms appeared as the followers of the two visored knights: these also passed in, and brought with them, what gave joy to the distressed fortress, several mules laden with bread, wine,

salted meats, fish, and other necessaries; affording in all a supply sufficient, when carefully allotted, to maintain the garrison for about two weeks, should they remain so long without other and more effectual succours. Probably, however, in the chances of war, ere that time was elapsed, Don Sanchez, or a party of Moors (for the Moors were now very generally in arms), might dislodge the camp, and render it no longer difficult to gain supplies from the neighbouring country.

That these adventurous knights were friendly to the fortress could not be doubted; yet there was a strange mixture of haughty reserve, of mystery, in their manner, which they maintained to all present except Don John. Even the Prior of Evora was refused admission to the private audience they demanded with the chief of the fortress. Thus much, however, the foremost knight condescended to make known to all present—that, whilst himself and his companions were resting at a small village adjacent to the plain, they had fallen in with the scout of Don John, who described the extreme distress of the garrison. In consequence of this, all the men-at-arms of his party who were provided with mules to pass into the mountains, had, instead of mounting them, laden their backs with such stores as could be immediately procured, by money or by force, from the villagers. Under shadow of the previous night, they had crossed the extremity of the plain, opposite to the camp of the master of the Wing (probably whilst he was engaged in defeating Hamet); and having passed the remaining hours of darkness in the thick shelter of a pine forest that grew at the base of the mountains, as soon as the dawn of day afforded light sufficient to guide them, they had ventured to ascend, unsuspected by the enemy, the precipitous track that led to the postern. Thus much was communicated in public, but nothing more; for the very followers of the two knights, no doubt acting in obedience to their masters, maintained a reserve that imitated their superiors. Indeed, they seemed to look with a degree of contempt on the followers of Don John, treated the Moors with an open abhorrence, and altogether shunned the society of the men-at-arms within the fortress. However offensive such conduct might be, nevertheless, the relief they had brought to starving men was too welcome to excite any open resentment of the haughty carriage of those from whom it was obtained.

The knight who conducted the boy and the lady, before he entered into any particular conference with Don John, requested she might be carried to a separate apartment, and

receive such assistance as her state of weakness required. He then turned to the youth, and took him by the hand, to lead him away as he was about to follow Don John. The boy, with tears in his eyes, begged to be allowed to remain with the lady. This the armed knight positively refused. He then spoke apart with the commander: and, from what followed, his discourse, it seemed, had relation to this youth; for no sooner was it ended, than, notwithstanding his tears or his entreaties, the youth was separated from the lady, consigned to a solitary chamber, and the key turned upon him as the door was closed.

One trifling circumstance did not escape the observation of Don John of Almeria: it was, that neither of the armed knights, even for a moment, raised their visors before this youth, whose person they had literally secured as a prisoner; but the instant he could no longer look upon the face of either, the foremost disclosed, as he unhelmed, the countenance of Alvaro Gonsalez. His companion, following his example, shewed the pale, haggard, and strongly marked features of Diego Lopez Pacheco. They both attended Don John, and deep and earnest was the conference they held with that commander.

Cassim, who lost not one point of the demeanour of the strangers, as he looked on the poor boy whom he had seen hurried across the hall to his prison, with a feeling of pity, experienced a degree of curiosity that was even tormenting to know who the knights could be (for they had unhelmed only in the presence of Don John), and what could be going forward in their secret conference. All but himself had now deserted the vaulted passage which led to the several rooms in the lower part of the castle; for, expressly to divert the attention of his fellows, so that they might not watch his own motions, Cassim, as storemaster, had given out to each of them a certain quantity of the newly arrived supplies, to be dressed as speedily as could be, and served up in the common hall.

Availing himself of this opportunity, he listened near the door of the imprisoned youth, he could hear a sobbing, as if the boy indulged in the maidenly weakness of tears; and, as he glided towards the door of the council-chamber, he distinguished low sounds, in an even, deliberate voice, that he fancied arose from Don John. These were suddenly broken by a loud high tone from one of the strangers, as in accents of command; yet he heard nothing very intelligibly; and,

presently, steps in the vaulted passage struck upon his ear. He turned round, and perceived the prior. Sullenness and discontent were in his brow; and Cassim, who was rogue enough to know that possessing the secret of the prior's selfish policy to keep a store of food when the rest were starving, gave him license to observe little ceremony towards the holy man, now at once followed him into his own apartment.

The churchman was in no good humour at being shut out from a conference where he deemed his station and friendship for Don John gave him a right to be admitted. He said, therefore, in a snappish way to Cassim, "What do you here? why do you presume to thrust yourself on my privacy?"

"Truly, holy father," replied Cassim, "those who are thrust out from the company of their equals need hardly be so chary of denying their presence to others they may deem their inferiors. Besides, the high sense I have of your reverence's wisdom ,seeing it can work miracles, as in the matter of the late fast, induced me to seek you; for, simple man though I be, I have that to communicate which may be of importance to all within the walls of this fortress. I thought there was no one to whom such matters could be so safely entrusted as to yourself. If I am wrong I crave pardon, and will go hence."

"Stay, Moor, stay," cried the Prior, who could be softened by a little flattery, even when it came from the despised lips of an infidel; and, perhaps, at this moment, it was the more pleasing on finding himself held so cheap by his compeers: "hast thou really aught to communicate worth hearing? Palter not with me, dog of an infidel, or I will have thee hanged by the heels over the castle wall."

"Not till your holiness," said Cassim, "can call forth a more worshipful observance of your commands than seems likely at present to take place. Yet I have matter to communicate, and secret matter too," continued Cassim, as he winked on the Prior with a most significant expression.

"Ha! what! secret matter!" exclaimed the holy man: "yet stand farther back; come not too near me, for thou art an infidel. What hast thou to say?"

"First, let the door be closed," said Cassim to the Prior, who stood near it; "and I see not, whilst those worthies hold debate, why thou and I should not settle matters in this fortress as well as they."

The Prior stood fixed with astonishment at the unparalleled freedom of the Moor; for Cassim addressed him in the tone and manner of an equal. "Know thy place, fellow," he said: "I endure no companionship with such as thou art."

"Saving when your reverence must either endure it, or go without the knowledge of that you would give half your abbey lands to learn," replied the unabashed herdsman.

There was a provoking manner about the Moor, that the Prior knew not how to bear with, nor yet how to resent. His coolness and familiarity could only arise from the consciousness of being able to communicate such secret intelligence, as, so wily a fellow was aware, would more than counterbalance the boldness he assumed in this colloquy; yet, as hitherto he had merely thrown out hints, and told nothing in direct terms, it awakened curiosity without satisfying the churchman that he did right to submit to such impertinence. The Prior, however, had no mind that the eye or ear of any third person should witness his present familiar intercourse with the Moor. He shuffled, therefore, towards the door, and saying he liked not the cold air of the hall, closed it, returned, and took his seat.

Cassim, without any hesitation, sat down by his side, as he said, "Didst thou see what was going on in the hall, when those strangers arrived, holy man?"

"Not I, truly," replied the Prior: "I started from my bed, when I heard that two knights had arrived with succours, and that they were about to be closeted with Don John. I hastened to robe me, knowing I should be wanted, where wisdom and conference, as twin-brothers, should go hand in hand. I descended, and—and—"

"Was shut out," said Cassim, filling up the pause, which the Prior had endeavoured to finish by a short cough, not liking to refer to the indignant manner in which he deemed he had been treated. "Then," continued the Moor, "I will tell you more than is known to any soul within these walls, saving the three now shut up together in yonder chamber of secret debate."

"Canst thou?" exclaimed the Prior, in a tone of surprise. "Of all earthly matters I would most desire to know who are those iron-headed fellows who have dared shut me out, and whom I just saw as closely visored as the mailed figure of St. David, that stands above the altar, dedicated to the slayer of the giant, in our church. Who are they?"

"Who they are I cannot tell," answered Cassim.

"And is this your secret?" cried the Prior. "By the holy bones of St. Francis, I do wrong thus to abuse my own dignity by holding debate with thee. Darest thou, fellow, make a jest of me?"

"Patience, holy father," said Cassim; "and though I know

not who they are, yet will I presently shew thee how thou canst make a jest of them all, in revenge for the slight they have put upon your reverence. Didst thou see the boy they have imprisoned in yonder chamber?"

"Not I, by the rood," said the Prior; "though I did hear that a woman, faint and weary with travel, and a boy, came with these knights."

"Then will I instruct you in that matter," replied Cassim, "as deep as yon knights would keep the secret even from your wisdom. The boy is the son of Don Pedro; and Alonso the king is his grandsire, or there is no truth in blood and feature!"

The Prior raised his eyes and hands with astonishment. "Thou dost not say so? Art thou sure of this?"

"As certain," said Cassim, "as that yonder light is the sun—that you are the Prior of Evora, full of wisdom and gravity, and that Cassim is no liar."

"Holy Mary!" exclaimed the Prior; "and have they locked up the heir of the heir to Portugal's crown? This is carrying matters too far. I joined Don Sanchez; for Alonso knew not how to be grateful, nor how to do right to zealous and pious men like myself: but touch not the Lord's anointed is Scripture command. I never dreamed of laying so much as a finger's end on any royal sprout belonging to a kingly stock. This will madden Alonso. We shall never have his brother, the Bastard, righted after this act. He will deal vengeance, instead of granting honourable terms, as an end to these civil broils. What can I do to shew myself the friend of the young prince? Art thou sure it is he?"

"Certain," said Cassim; "for to tell the truth, Prior, I have held him before now, when he was scarce four years old, upon these knees, and have often seen him since."

"Thou! a Moor, a slave! a conquered infidel!" exclaimed the Prior; "and talk of holding a royal boy on thy knees? It is impossible!"

"It is true," said Cassim; "for know you not, Donna Ines de Castro was his godmother, and brought him up after the death of Constantia?"

"And what is that to the purpose?" inquired the Prior.

"Marry, no more than this," answered Cassim, "that Donna Ines had in her service a Moorish damsel named Ximena, whom I once loved and wooed; but Ximena turned Christian, and would not listen to me. It was in seeking her that I often saw the young Prince Ferdinand when a child."

"And yonder woman, who is she?"

"Ines de Castro, or I am much in error," said the Moor: "I saw not her face; but I knew her slight figure, and her hand and little foot, as well as if they had been my own."

"Not by similitude, I take it," said the Prior, as his lips curled into something like a smile, when he looked on the broad tawny hands of the Moor, calculated as they were to wield a club as well as a cimeter: "thou hast a sharp eye and a sharp wit, Cassim."

"And they shall help thee, holy man," replied the Moor, "to an excellent revenge on those misproud knights, who thrust thee out from their debates, wilt thou but hear me. Ay, and what is more than all," he added, in a grave manner, as he looked the prior stedfastly in the face, "they shall help thee to do an act that both Moor and Christian will applaud, since it will imitate that mercy which Allah, who made us all, shews to his creatures."

"A miracle!" exclaimed the Prior, "a very miracle! to hear a Moor talk of godliness like a monk. A miracle, in good sooth!"

"I have learned how to enact them from thee, good father," said Cassim; "and I trust my knowledge will not fail me, when I lack wine or porridge. But think better of us Moors, reverend prior, and learn that we are men who have hearts alive to humanity as well as yourselves, with some wit to know how to give to good will the life of good action."

"What is thy purpose, Moor?" said the Prior. "I am a man of tender mould, and would not be loth to do good even to thee, did I not fear the censures of mother church, as thou art an infidel."

"Rather fear," replied Cassim, "the reproach of thy own conscience, should you deny what I ask; for if thou dost, it will be consenting that a mother, noble in blood and great in heart, shall become childless as well as widowed: I would have thee save Hamet, who, without thy aid, must this day die."

"How can I save him?" said the Prior. "Trust me, I would be nothing loth to do it: for when I saw the brave youth, who risked his life to get us bread, stand last night before these walls in the hands of those ready to slay him, I had grievous yearnings of compassion; and, like the prophet Jeremiah over the fall of Judah, I cried out in my sorrows, My bowels! my bowels! yet how can I save him, when he who commands here will not so much as admit me to his councils?"

"You can save him, you shall save him," cried Cassim: "I will teach you a way; you are a scholar, full of learning as of tender mercy."

"I will save him," exclaimed the Prior, in a burst of gratified feeling; "that is, if I can," he added, correcting himself on second thoughts: "but how? which way?"

Cassim then unfolded, with as much brevity as he possibly could, the ingenious plan he had devised to make the Prior of Evora the instrument to preserve Hamet by what might be called a stratagem of war. He concluded with these words: "Now, holy father, thou hast heard all; and it needs but for thee to indite a letter, as I will tell thee. Here are thy writing tools: indite me the epistle without delay; and whilst those iron-visored secret counsellors are deep in their plots and plans, which they deem you not worthy to share, do you act without them. As head of your order—as a sacred ambassador of peace, as high in the favour of Don Sanchez—it becomes your dignity to do so. Act for yourself, and ask no man's counsel."

"I will do so," replied the Prior: "what shall I indite? Tell me, good Moor; for my mind is somewhat unsettled by the suddenness of this thing, and I always take time to compose my homilies, not liking the idle babble of those monks who preach without book."

Cassim determined to lose no time, and urged the Prior instantly to put his intentions into practice; well knowing, that should the present feelings of offended pride on the one hand, and gratified vanity on the other, subside, the holy man might change his purpose. Once more, therefore, did he successfully explain and enforce his plan. So cunningly indeed did Cassim play upon the Prior, that he saw not at the moment he was acting no higher a part than that of secretary to a Moor. For though the churchman worded it, the Moor suggested every item. The Prior, therefore, under his directions, wrote as follows:

"To the most noble Joseph, Count of Amiranti, master of the holy and military order of the Wing, I, Paul, Prior of Evora, with the blessing of the Lady Virgin, and all saints, send greeting: Forasmuch as it has chanced by the arrival of certain knights at this fortress, who have brought with them more than a hundred men-at-arms, and great stores and munition sufficient to supply the garrison for six months ('St. Francis assoilize me for the sin of lying, though it be but upon paper,' said the Prior): now I, Paul of Evora, as

a member of holy church, and having no quarrel, in my own person, against the blood royal, think it meet to apprise you, that these same knights have also brought with them the most noble infant of the Infant of Portugal, Prince Ferdinand, a prisoner. ('Write prisoner in large letters,' said Cassim.—'Don't you see I have done so?' replied the Prior. 'I could never read out of any other than an Arabic book in all my life,' said Cassim: 'but go on.' The Prior did so.) Now I, Paul of Evora, being desirous to spare the shedding of innocent blood, do hereby also apprise you that it has been advised and determined by these knights, now in council, that if you, as threatened, do, on this day, inflict the doom of death on Hamet, the son of Alcanzor, now your prisoner, that so soon as you shall have done this act of cruelty, they, in like manner, will retaliate upon you, according to the reprisals of arms, and will also take away life from this most sweet limb of Portugal's royal stock; inasmuch as though Hamet be a Moor, and Prince Ferdinand a Christian, yet the Moor did adventure his life in the service of Don Sanchez, and at the command of Don John of Almeria. I, Paul of Evora, would therefore, in this private and well-affectioned manner, entreat and counsel you, as you love your king, your young prince, and would see an end to these unhappy civil broils, that you forthwith spare the life of Hamet, free him from his chains, and observe towards him all the honourable usages of war, till such time as he can be ransomed or exchanged by some other noble prisoner. And in truth of all these counsels and advices, I have hereunto set my hand and seal, etc.

"PAUL, Prior of Evora."

Whilst the Prior sealed and tied up this long-winded epistle with a silken string, Cassim spoke rapidly his farther purpose. "I will to the armoury, case me in visor and helm, seize the white flag of truce, and away from the postern, to the enemies in the camp. Do thou, Prior, be on the watch. Trust me, we have no time to lose. Let none know of this but Aza, and the old Moor Zegris, who has the postern watch: he will let me in, when I return under cover of the night: and as to Don John and his counsellors, I will be their warrant they have not settled half so weighty a matter as thou and I have done in our conference; for I trust by this stratagem we shall have saved the life of Hamet. What will become of Donna Ines de Castro, I know not; but I doubt there will be dark work with her, Prior; and she is a helpless woman."

"No matter what becomes of her," said the Prior: "she is a Castilian; and her influence with the prince, Don Pedro, was the beginning of all these troubles. Do thou away. I shall have a brave triumph, when this comes to light, over those who spurned my counsels. May be it will bring the king to reason, when Alonso finds how I interfered to save his grandchild's life."

Cassim smiled at observing the cunning of the Prior, who already seemed to entertain thoughts of turning to his own advantage an occurrence, the whole danger of which to Prince Ferdinand had its sole existence in the active brain of the Moor, who had created it as a sort of *ruse de guerre* to save the life of Hamet.

Cassim left the Prior, his own heart full of high and anxious hopes. He concealed his person as proposed, and, by the connivance of Zegris, who kept watch at the postern, stole out unperceived with his flag of truce and the letter. The Moor shot like an arrow under the castle walls, and speedily passed down the rocky defile towards the camp of the master of the Wing.

CHAPTER XX.

True nobility is exempt from fear—
More can I bear than you dare execute.

SHAKSPEARE.

We shall not follow the steps of Cassim, who, bent on the deliverance of Hamet, had thus artfully taken advantage of the weak points in the prior's character to induce him to practise what the good father himself deemed a holy cheat to save the life of the young and brave. Our narrative leads us to another scene, still within the fortress of Death, where Ines de Castro, as Cassim had truly stated her to be, was now confined a captive. The ill-starred fortunes of Ines seemed to pursue her with unrelenting vigour, for instead of reaching her husband in safety, according to the generous purpose of the Talba, she had but exchanged one prison for another, one oppressor for a second yet more cruel.

It was on the third day of her captivity, for though provided with all things necessary for her comfort she was not suffered to leave her chamber, that after long having pondered on her doubtful fortunes, steps without the door announced the approach of some intruder upon her solitude. Too well did she suspect who it might be that thus disturbed the only resource left to her—the converse of her own sad thoughts. The door was slowly opened, carefully closed again, and the person who intruded turning towards her, Ines immediately knew the features of Don Diego. It appeared this was the first time she had seen him unhelmed since she had fallen within his power, as she exclaimed, "It is no longer, then, doubtful to whom I owe these acts of violence that have deprived me of liberty and hope: you are still my unrelenting oppressor."

"I am not, by heaven!" replied Diego: "hear me, lady—friend or foe, I am such at your own choice. I beseech you to hear me with temper." As he spoke, there was something in the manner and countenance of Diego less wild and impassioned than usual; yet, as if he himself felt some sense of shame for the base part he had acted, and was conscious even now he was about to act, he cast his eyes upon the ground

whilst he spoke, unable to meet with effrontery the indignant looks of the woman he had so cruelly persecuted.

In the character of Ines, though in general soft and yielding, there was, as a daughter of Castile, that high sense of honour, of respect due to herself and to her sex, which gave her spirit in these moments of trial, when women of an ordinary mould would have been overpowered with terror, or silent, perhaps, from apprehension. To Don Diego's last request, therefore, she answered with animation: "I will not listen to idle words and vain excuses. Restore me the liberty of which you have deprived me. Resign the control that by violence, and not by any shew of justice, you have assumed over my free will, and then ask me to listen. But, till then, think not that I will, by my own act, so acknowledge your authority as that it should give you a license to propose to me either your friendship or your enmity: I despise both. The time must come when you shall answer for these things. Beware, then, how you provoke me to become an enemy."

"Think," said Diego, "of the wrong I have sustained at your hands."

"No wrong," replied Ines, "can justify this last act. If I did the injury, you made your appeal to the king for redress. Cruel as that was, yet was it mercy compared to this. What you then did was public, and in my appeal to the church it would have been as publicly answered. But now, like the assassin who strikes in the dark, you have stooped, in disgrace to your honour as a knight, your feelings as a man, to deal in private villany."

"It is false," said Diego, as he reddened with passion at the severe reproaches thus cast upon him: "I would guard you with life itself; nay, would devote all to you, so you would but hear me."

"If I am to judge your future purposes," said Ines, "by those already known, I should place as little trust in you as I would in one whose acts have ever been foul whilst his words were fair. Did you not come, you and your companion, visored and shrouded, followed by a base band of your own creatures, to waylay our path, and in the depth of a forest, fit only for robbers and their deeds, tear me, and yonder noble boy, from our own people, make us prisoners, bear us away, unheeding the cries of an unhappy woman; unregardful of that loyalty which should have taught you, if humanity had no power to plead for us, to respect the sacred person of a prince? You did this, whilst, like a coward, who dares act

what he would tremble to avouch, you kept your faces shrouded by iron visors even from the darkness of the night."

"I did this," cried Diego, who now, wrought up to the highest degree of passionate resentment, was once more as bold to justify villany as he had been to act it—"I did this, and will do more, unless you yield to that you have no power to avert. I have listened to all your reproaches, and will only requite them in offering you safety and happiness. If you choose misery and dishonour, it is at your own election. I am not to be moved from my just purpose—for just it is, since, by the laws of God and man, by your own act, you are mine. I am not to be shaken by a storm of words, that, from woman's lips, fall but like the hail from the clouds on a coat of steel, leaving no impress. Yet," he added, in a gentler manner, "think not that even thy own frantic words can move me to abandon thee to misery. Thou fairest among women—the first, the only object of my devoted love—even in these moments, when thy bitter taunts sting more than an adder's fang, thy very scorn is dearer to me than would be the affections of another. As I look on thee, there is a charm in thy presence which disarms even my resentments. Not the mother, whose heart and whose eye is with her infant when it sleeps, is more watchful in her holy care than I would be over thee. Come, then, Ines, forget the past; teach thy heart to relent; bid the frank and gentle feelings of thy early youth return, when Diego was not abhorred, when he was thy betrothed husband, and all shall be forgiven. Why wert thou ever false?"

The manner in which this was spoken—as it recalled to Ines the only error of her life, a breach of a sacred contract, that had given her serious uneasiness, however unworthy Diego might be—somewhat softened even her resentment for his subsequent conduct; and she said, in a milder tone, yet with firmness, "I have already answered thee, in the hall of appeal, before the king; and but for the unjust means you have pursued to assert your claims, I would ask your forgiveness for that in which I did you wrong. More than this I cannot do. Trust me, you have no cause to repine for the loss of one with whom you could never taste of happiness. Thy soul and mine, thy thoughts and my thoughts, are as wide asunder as earth and heaven. Thy impassioned nature and violent acts could find no sympathy in one who humbly trusts in God, and the calm dictates of reason, for her guidance. There is no harmony in our natures, and there could be none in our affections. Wherefore, then, repine?"

"Ines," said Don Diego, who felt a degree of hope, he had really no cause to entertain, from the calmness with which she now spoke—"Ines, you mistake my character: I am not by nature what I seem to be. My heart, like your own, is alive to just feelings; to a just sense of what is due to man. It is you who have made me other. Your scorn, your cold return to those hopes you fanned into life and being, have driven me to be what I abhor; degraded in my own eyes, till I have become the sport of every wayward passion."

"And think you this can move me to change my purpose?" said Ines: "I must cease even to pity that man, who, hating what is vile in itself, can yet be weak, ay, wicked enough, to follow it."

"It is in your own power to change me," said Diego: "to you my soul would be like a faithful mirror, that would reflect yourself. You know not, Ines, the character of man. Unlike womankind, he can find no middle course in action. If his nature has in it the strength of the oak, his passions have also the violence of the tempest; and solid oak itself will fall before its fury. I am a man, who, like others, have high hopes, aspiring thoughts, that can rise at the call of arms, and rest on the summit of ambition. For this I have done much; I have sacrificed more: yet this, and more than this, would I sacrifice to win but the return of thy regard."

It lies open before you," replied Ines: "my regard can be given to none but him who shall prove himself worthy of it—of honour. The good have ever my esteem. Hear me, Don Diego, and it may be that what I would urge shall save you from that suffering with which you in vain threaten me, whilst you assail my resolution. Though you have kept me a close prisoner within this chamber, yet even from this window have I both seen and heard sufficient of what passes within the fortress to assure me you are now leagued with those who are in arms against their lawful king. Were it other, you could have no power, no influence here, to detain me."

"It is not for such purpose that——" said Diego.

Ines interrupted him, and continued, "What are your own dark designs is best known to your own heart, and to Him who sees its inmost thought. Yet thus much I would counsel you, thus much would I do for you, as some small recompense for the injuries you think you have sustained at my hand. You and your companion in arms have given up Prince Ferdinand into the power of traitors. I need not tell you such an act will be visited with death as its reward. Alonso will never

pardon him who shall have placed his own blood in so much peril. The youthful prince neither saw, nor suspected, by whom he was made prisoner; for too well did you shroud your persons and your intents from his knowledge. Restore him to liberty; guide him, and the unhappy woman who now pleads to you, in safety from these walls; quit the traitors with whom you are leagued; return to honour and to loyalty; and Ines will never betray her knowledge of the man who dared imprison the son of a royal house."

"The young prince," said Diego, "is cared for with all respect. Though he is held a prisoner, as you have truly suspected, yet is he not my charge. My friend and companion in arms holds him a captive."

"And are not you a sharer in his guilt?" replied Ines; "you who consent to it? Think how little it becomes a man to deal thus by an unoffending boy; think of his tender years. And oh, if you have, as you profess, but one feeling that would spare me sorrow, judge what I must suffer when I remember, that, to save me, the gentle Ferdinand, at his tender age, with sense and goodness far beyond it, exposed himself to this peril to rescue me. If you are deaf to my wrongs, yet look with mercy on him; let his innocence plead; and, if all else fails, remember he is the offspring of a royal line;—of him who, though he may have abused the power delegated to his hands, is still in this land God's anointed; the judge, the ruler of his people. Dare not to place a sacrilegious hand on one whom heaven itself has sealed with the sacred character of prince. Tremble at the name of traitor. Fear God, if you respect not man."

The energetic manner in which Ines pleaded for the young prince seemed to shake the resolution of Diego; yet, incapable of doing a generous act without some base alloy, he only answered, "I will release the prince; I will guide him and yourself, in despite of all opposition, from these towers in safety, so that you consent to be mine."

"Then is there no hope," said Ines; "and be my trust placed in Him, who, though for some high purpose of his secret counsel, he awhile resigns the creature of his hand to the power of her enemies, will yet hear the captive's moan. And as a father looks on his child, even so has He an eye ever watchful, a mercy ever open to the prayer of the miserable who turn to him. Do what thou wilt, I will plead to thee, hard-hearted man, no more."

"Know then," said Diego, "that thy own safety, thy own

life, depends on this present hour. Say thou wilt yield to my love, thou wilt fulfil thy contract, and thou art preserved. Deny me, and not even I may save thee. Thy power with Don Pedro has been the means to heap office, honours, riches on thy own Castilian nobles, who came beggared to our court, there to usurp the rights and benefits that should be held by the native-born of Portugal. This, this alone, and not the wrongs of Don Sanchez, though they are made the theme of complaint, has incensed the faction who now support him for the ruin of Don Pedro; for the overthrow of those foreign favourites, thus the object of revenge. Your fate is sealed should you refuse my suit."

"I can never yield to it," replied Ines: "yetbe think you. Do a generous act for its own sake, and do not thus disgrace the noble badge of chivalry you wear, by making it the means of a base and selfish barter."

"No!" exclaimed Diego: "I will not again be fooled by woman. I offer you freedom, honour, safety. I offer them at no light risk; since, to give you these, I must resign all the long-cherished hopes of my ambition. If I lose them, it shall be for something yet more dearly prized—for thyself, Ines. I have the power over thee, nay the right, and I will seal the terms of thy deliverance ere it is thine. I trust not again to woman's words, seeing how light a toy it is when caprice or flattery, or a new gaud, can, like the wandering wind, disperse it into air. Be mine, and all shall be forgotten; all shall be well between us."

"It is in vain," said Ines: "I never can."

Diego interrupted her: "May be," he said, "you doubt my honourable purpose. But know, lady, there is a holy man within these walls, who, even this hour, will unite our hands; one who deems thy contract sacred, and will pronounce the nuptial benediction. Think of this. Make thy choice of evils—if you will have it that honourable love is choice of evil. And even were I the vilest wretch that crawls on earth, surely liberty and my plighted vows were better than this prison—which thou canst never leave, saving for one more fatal. Nay, I will not hear thy denial. I will not suffer thee to condemn thy youth and beauty to so much hopeless sorrow. Come with me: the priest waits in the chapel to receive our vows: come and offer them."

As Diego spoke, he attempted to place his hands on Ines, so as to force her from the chamber. She cried aloud for help, as she sprang from his grasp, shuddering at the determined

manner in which he proceeded to an extremity that was as unlooked for as it was appalling to her feelings. In the agony of her mind she wrung her hands in despair, and again called on help, till the vaulted roof of her chamber re-echoed her shrill cries.

"It is in vain," said Diego: "think you I am unsupported in what I do? All here consider you as my affianced bride; and no man will dare interfere to withhold from me the woman whom heaven itself has given to me as one bone, one flesh. Thou art, thou shalt be my wife."

Again he approached her. Ines, driven to distraction by his conduct, and seeing no hope of rescue, extended her hands so as to drive him back; and with a countenance to which the despair of her mind had given the hues of death, exclaimed, as her last hope of honour and of safety—"Rash man, forbear! I am a wedded wife, a mother!"

Diego fell back some paces from her, as if struck by the bolt of heaven: so wholly unexpected, so ruinous to all his hopes, was this avowal. He gazed wildly upon her. He scarcely seemed to draw breath, and no word escaped his quivering lips. His hand trembled, and as the thoughts of past injury, of the insults of Don Pedro, and the banishment he had endured for so many years, rushed on his mind, he struck his forehead in passion, and uttered, in a voice scarcely human—"Then is thy doom sealed, for thou art the wife of my deadly foe, Don Pedro of Portugal: nay, deny it not. He is the rival; he is the accursed thief who corrupted thy heart; dazzled thy vain mind by princely flattery; insulted me. Do I breathe and speak it? Struck me a blow! a blow, ay, and yet a deeper wound, stole thee from me!—thee! whom I loved from boyhood; cherished, dear as light and life!—the betrothed of my heart; the dearest object of my soul!"

The thought of his early affection, his disappointment, for a moment melted even the stern feelings of Diego; tears suffused his eyes, and stood in large drops on his cheek. He dashed them off with a frantic gesture; and, as if incensed with himself that he could thus give way to tender recollections, exclaimed—"Tears! Am I a man, that I can thus practise the weakness of woman? of deceitful, cruel, wretched woman! who has tears at command, false as those of Egypt's crocodile, when it would lure its victim to destruction. But I will not yield to this. No, by the light of heaven, tears shall be changed to fire; love to vengeance; that is yet mine—a banquet where the injured soul may glut itself to the full in

blood. I will have love, or my revenge. You have robbed me of a wife: no matter. You were not worthy to share so honoured a rank with one whose heart was so true to you as mine. I will be like thyself, false, base, treacherous; I care not. You have made me what I am."

Ines, overpowered by his passionate expressions, by the energy of that despair which, like a hurricane, carries with it a force that bears down all that would withstand its course, had neither the power to reason, nor to retort reproaches; they would be unheeded, unheard. She had recourse, therefore, to the last, the only weapon that is powerful in woman—her affliction; and, dropping on her knees before the impassioned Diego, raised her hands in an attitude of supplication, as with streaming eyes she conjured him to pity her. "Shew mercy to me," she said, "as you hope one day yourself to meet it. Pardon the wrong I have done you—pardon, pardon; and oh, as you honour the memory of her who gave you being, and nursed you in her maternal arms, do not use the power you possess to crush a helpless woman: yet, if nothing will satisfy you but vengeance, take my life, my unhappy life; and when you look on the cold form of her you once loved, as it lies at your feet, let your hard heart relent: do not pursue a guilty purpose towards my husband."

"Thy husband!" said Diego, as a bitter smile curled his lip, which gave to his livid countenance such an expression as might have suited the malignant triumph of a fiend, whose joys arise from the misery of mankind: "thy husband! and how does he treat thee? the woman who, to become his wife, forfeited her truth and honourable bond? Thou art such a wife as a slave only could hope to be: thy place among the noble matronage of the land denied thee; thy marriage held secret as the grave; whilst thy fair fame, doubted and suspected, has become the theme for every saucy tongue, for every wagging head amongst the vulgar, who nod at thee as thou passest along, and question if thou art maid, wife, or concubine!"

The tone of bitter scorn in which Diego so forcibly presented before Ines what was in fact but a truth she had long felt, yet dared not dwell upon, even in her own thoughts, stung her to the very soul; yet, not enduring that a man so devoid of all that was worthy, as Diego had proved himself to be, should thus condemn the conduct of Don Pedro, it recalled to her that spirit which for a moment had deserted her; and starting from the ground where she had supplicated in vain, she said,

"Cease thy insolent censure of one who is as far above thee, in all that can render honoured and beloved the heart of man, as heaven is higher than the base earth it looks upon. Leave me, or I will call aloud, till every soul within the fortress shall be alarmed by the cries of my despair. It cannot be but some one has a breast capable of pity."

"I will leave you," replied Diego; "yet but for a brief space. Your fate be on your own head. Gonsalez has urged me to what I will not name. When next we meet, it will be to remove thee to such keeping as it has not entered into thy thought is in store for thee. The hour of safety is past: my honourable love you cannot have. Your life may be spared by yielding to what you deem dishonour. Yet is it none to one of thy broken faith. To-morrow decide, or—perish."

"I am not to be subdued by threats," said Ines. "My life you dare not touch, unless you dare God by an act of murder! For the rest, whilst life and sense remain, I will defend myself against dishonour."

"Bethink thee," said Diego, who no longer struggled with even the faint spark of his better feelings; "bethink thee; thou art in my power, within walls of strength and stone."

"God's power is above thine," replied Ines, whose strong sense of religious feeling restored to her some degree of courage, and gave her the firmness once more to reply with the tone of undaunted resolution. "Make thy walls of iron, thy doors of brass, turn upon them the treble key of falsehood, violence, and treason; yet know that He, before whom the hard rocks shall melt and be dissolved, as easily as the crystal-seeming ice, even He can deliver me out of thy bonds, as he burst abroad the iron doors of Herod's strength. The messenger of God spoke but his word, and chains fell from the captive's hands, whilst the presence of the Divine Majesty made the prison-darkness to become light. I fear thee not: I fear not what man can do to me; for strong is my trust in God!"

"Let the God, whose law thou hast broken, then, deliver thee," said Diego, "thou wife of a false prince."

"The tongue is false that slanders him," replied Ines. "Thou art the traitor! Once more I charge thee, give liberty to me and to the noble Ferdinand; or the hour may come when I will proclaim thy treason, and the treason of the base Gonsalez, to Alonso, thy king and master."

"The birds of the air must be thy heralds first," replied Diego. "Gonsalez shall know of this threat. To-morrow we

meet for the last time. You know the consequence: to-morrow you have no hope, unless it is bought at my price."

Thus saying, the infamous and haughty Diego retired from the turret, where he had acted a part even yet far worse than he had proposed to himself. So true is it that wickedness increases by indulgence; and if once the floodgates of iniquity are opened, the tide will roll on, overwhelming in its course any feeble obstacles which may arise as barriers to its fury.

CHAPTER XXI.

Here is a hand to hold a sceptre up,
And with the same to act controlling laws.
SHAKSPEARE.

We must now conduct the reader to the camp of Alonso the Brave; for that monarch, in consequence of the insurrection of the Moors (now become general), as well as the strong party of Don Sanchez, had taken the field in person, to act in concert with his son Don Pedro, to subdue this fearful rebellion, which, like fire, spread destruction in its course, and raged throughout the kingdom with uncontrollable fury. Had the Moors alone risen, they might have been easily subdued; but the unnatural union of Moslem and Christian, in this civil strife, had given them a strength which they could never otherwise have obtained.

The army was stationed not many leagues from the ancient town of Coimbra, and within a day's march of the camp of the master of the Wing, we have so repeatedly noticed. The site was that of a vast plain watered by the Mondego, and commanding all those advantages so desirable for an army. A strong fortress guarded a pass that led into the mountains of Coimbra, and the river formed, in its circuitous windings, an effectual barrier to any sudden attack from an enemy. It was here that Alonso had taken his station after more than one engagement, in which, though he had kept the rebel forces of his brother at bay, he could hardly be called the victor. His Queen, his mother Isabella, and the Infanta, Princess Mary, were with him; as, for their greater security, he deemed it better they should follow the royal tent than be left at Cintra, which had already suffered from repeated assaults.

The camp was brilliant; it contained the flower of Portugal's chivalry and men-at-arms, who still remained loyal to the king. At the date of our narrative, the character of the Portuguese, as a people, was of a very different order to what it is at the present time. Accustomed to long and arduous contests with the Moors—born in a country that relied on the

valour of its inhabitants to maintain its independence—jealous of the power of Spain, and frequently at war with its petty states, Portugal was distinguished amongst nations for the chivalrous spirit of her nobles, and the military ardour of her people.

The tents of her army now rose white and glittering on the plain. Magnificent was the spectacle which presented itself when Alonso, as it was his custom, daily rode from band to band, almost from rank to rank, to examine their state of defence, their discipline, or military exercises; and to infuse into them, both by example and exhortation, the high enthusiasm of his own character as a commander and a prince. His cavalry, composed of the knights of the religious and military orders of the Wing, of St. James, and of Christ, presented an imposing body. Each was clad in polished steel, with flowing robes of white or crimson, adorned with collars composed of gold and jewels. Their plumes floating in the wind above their barred helmets; the silken banner, the flashing lance, the buckler, and the noble war-horse, with rich housings that fell to the ground, altogether presented such a spectacle of the "pride and pomp of glorious war," that nothing in modern times could compare with it. The archers, clad in linked mail, each with his arblast, or his bow, in hand; the quiver of his winged arrows athwart his shoulders, a sword or axe by his side; these looked, when drawn up in line, like one compact, invulnerable body of moving steel; so admirably did they exercise in concert, and so closely maintained they their ranks.

The heralds and trumpeters in coats of velvet embroidered with gold, at the moment of the king's approach before the line, gave breath to the martial clarions, that rung through the plain, and were echoed back from the distant mountains, as lance, banner, and spear dropped before the king, at whose command they were raised again in an instant, and flashed, as they caught the rays of the sun, like a sudden gleam of lightning shot from a cloud. The various instruments in the hands of the minstrels, who marched with the army, burst forth into warlike strains, as the deep roll of the drum, and the loud blast of the trumpet, united their strength of sound to the harmony of flutes, clarionets, and rebecs.

The king, as he rode from rank to rank, looked like the 'fiery Mars.' Athletic in his stately form, yet full of grace and majesty, and governing his horse (which seemed to understand those movements of bit and rein, too slight to be

detected by the common eye) with the utmost ease, his presence inspired that feeling of high admiration in the breasts of the soldiers, which amounted almost to devotion. It was such a feeling as none but a warrior king could inspire: it seemed to say, whilst shouts of welcome burst from ten thousand throats, "Thou art a king to be honoured as well as feared."

Alonso held in his hand a ponderous mace; with him a favourite weapon, and one suited to his strength in battle. And though the bulk of his person, in addition to the weight of his armour, clear and shining as a mirror, was such, that it would have borne down an ordinary animal; yet the strong and large-limbed war-horse that he rode carried his noble rider on its back as if he were a child, and conscious, it might be thought, that he carried a king in majesty of person as in right and rank, he raised his head and neighed in answer to the greetings of the trumpet, waved his rich mane, arched his neck, and fixed his eye on the gallant band, whilst the smoke of his breath issued from his distended nostrils. Indeed, he might be said to represent the sublime image of the war-horse in Job, thus emphatically described: "He saith among the trumpets, Ha! ha! and he smelleth the battle afar off,—the thunder of the captains, and the shouting."

Even in the midst of the tumult of war, Alonso did not neglect his favourite sport—hunting. An extensive forest, which lay within a short distance of the camp, afforded the means; where the active king made war upon "the dappled burghers of the wood," and the grisly boar, with as much zeal, and with something more of decisive success, than he had yet found in his present campaign.

In the centre of the canvass city, there stood three pavilions of the richest silk, whose fringes, ornaments, and cordage, were intermixed with gold, and would have adorned a tournament. Near these, which belonged to the three royal dames, stood a large plain tent, not otherwise distinguished than that from its top streamed a banner with the eagle on the wing, which shewed it to be the tent of the monarch. Every thing within corresponded to the character of its inhabitant. A suit of armour, crowned by its waving casque, stood like a trophy of past deeds, and at hand for future achievements. The lance, the sword, and mace, rested near it.

On a table, covered with costly work from the fair hands of the ladies of the court, lay letters, papers, despatches, maps, etc. connected with the state of the country. More than one

pair of antlers, as trophies of the late victories in the forest, and the enormous tusks of a boar, were suspended, to hold lights, on the sides of the tent; and the skins of animals of the chase were thrown over the couch on which Alonso took his rest.

His two noble English hounds lay at his feet, and seemed to watch their master's eyes, like slaves obedient to the slightest indications of his will. Alonso, who by his dress, that of a hunting suit, it should seem had but newly returned from the chase, sat in a fixed attitude. His head was uncovered, and displayed his thick, short, and curly locks in great disorder, as heated and wearied with violent exercise, he passed his fingers through them, or pushed back the hair from his flushed brow. There was a frown upon it, that argued displeasure, whilst the angry glance, that every now and then shot from his eye, might be compared to the first gleams of lightning suddenly bursting from under the dark cloud of a gathering storm.

Near him was Azevedo, that wise and patient minister of his counsels, that true friend of his country in weal or woe. In his countenance there was earnestness and attention, whilst not a line of his face had other than that expression of calm and dignified self-possession, which seldom, if ever, forsook him. His complexion retained its uniform healthful colour; yet the colour was neither heightened by passion, nor blanched with apprehension. In his hand he held a letter which had probably been a theme of discourse between himself and Alonso.

Near Azevedo stood the Bishop of Guarda, who, according to the custom of the period, never appeared before the king, or in public, without the robes of his sacred profession. He was of a tall, severe, unbending figure, with a countenance, though less energetic and possibly less frank, yet full of as high and haughty bearing as that of Alonso himself. On the whole, the countenance of the former was not easily read, it was one whose strong markings and impenetrable look afforded a subject for conjecture and curious observation; since such a face hinted, rather than expressed, a character of which the thoughts and passions were those of an extraordinary man.

The robes of the ecclesiastic were costly, his cope being composed of embroidered velvet, and his vest, which was open in front of the throat, was furred with minever. A collar of jewels supported a diamond cross worth an earl's coronet. Not a finger on his hands but displayed rings of great value and

beauty; and though the crosier upon which he leaned was in form that of a shepherd's staff, yet never was so simple an emblem held by a prouder hand, not even when it was seen in that of the English Becket. In himself, however, the individual to whom these outward pomps belonged seemed not to be a vain person. He was, in fact, too proud to cherish a passion the property of but the weak and ignorant. His outward adornments were the things belonging to his office, not to the man, who no more heeded them than had he been an image of one of those saints, that, for its own supposed intrinsic excellence, is hung, like a trophy, with costly ornaments, but is in itself wholly unconscious of the rich burden it is made to support, dazzling the eyes of the vulgar, but unseen by its own.

Another figure completed this group. It was that of a female, who sat somewhat retired in the background of the pavilion; yet, as it appeared by her eager looks and fixed attention, she took much interest in what was passing around. This lady was the Infanta, Princess Mary, who frequently visited the tent of her royal father: nor was she forbidden his presence even in moments of debate; her natural character rendering her by no means unfit to listen to a warlike council, or to be the companion of a warrior parent in his camp.

The princess had no personal attractions, at least none that are deemed such in women; yet in the sallow and strongly marked lines of her countenance there was the stamp of sense and intelligence, but united to nothing gentle or amiable; and though not devoid of dignity in her tall masculine figure, still there was something about her altogether so repulsive, that, notwithstanding she was the sole daughter of a mighty king, no prince had yet been hardy enough to seek her in marriage. Indeed she was formed to awe by her very look; and love, though represented blind, is, nevertheless, sufficiently instinctive to plume his wing and fly before even a princess who has nothing in her of the gentleness and kindness of woman. The princess sat apart; and, though she listened, did not share in the discourse.

The king, whose looks sufficiently spoke the irritating feelings to which the communications made by Azevedo had given birth, turned an eye full of resentful expression on the churchman, as he said, "This, Bishop of Guarda, comes of your meddling in our affairs. Algarva was beggared, impoverished by long and harassing wars; fire and sword had been carried through that country. Her castles were rased to the ground, her lands wasted, whilst her forests were felled to supply fuel

to burn her own cities. How then could Algarva be restored to a proper state of defence, after it became ours, but by furnishing the means to build new fortresses, where lay the ruins of the old ones? to wall her cities as they rose again, and to place arms in the hands of her people? There were means by which these things might have been done, ample means, but for your dark policy, your wily intrigues with Rome, and those of your hooded and mitred brethren, who made his Holiness threaten me with ban and curse, ay, and interdict to boot my whole kingdom, did I not forego them. Now see the consequence of your own act."

"Sire," said the bishop, in a tone as cold as the king's was impassioned, "your majesty is like those sick men, who, when they have a disease in some limb of the body, that may corrupt the whole blood and destroy the vital functions, instead of going about to seek a cure, rather irritate the distemper by troubling the mind to find out the cause. It would better become a Christian king to think by what means he can drive these Moorish invaders from Algarva, than to talk of the weak points of that kingdom which has rendered it an easy prey to infidel arms."

There was an expression of malice in the countenance of Alonso, as he replied, "But know you not, Bishop of Guarda, to follow up the figure of your own specch, that when the cause of a disease is known, it is the first step towards the cure? Even so do I, by fathoming the weakness of Algarva, purpose hereafter to apply the remedy that shall give it strength and endurance. Now, as I am a Christian man, a crowned prince," continued the king, his voice rising with warmth, "it is not to be endured that the nobles of Portugal, and the layman who toils for the pittance of his daily bread, should all contribute to render our kingdom secure, whilst the clergy who, with reverence be it spoken, eat the bread of the land, for which others toil and bleed, in peace within their own convents should contribute nothing. In spite of Rome itself, we will once again levy the tenth upon the clergy. Abbeys, monasteries, convents, no matter what! Yes, for the space of two years, will we impose on them this levy to repair our crumbling castles and ruined cities of Algarva."

"Forbear to do this, sire," said the bishop boldly; "you know not, in the blindness of your secular policy, what you do. Think you means like these, means forbidden by his Holiness and the church, will repair the towers of your vain defence? Alas! it will destroy them. The curses of the mini-

sters of the high saints of heaven shall, like the trumpet-sound before the walls of Jericho, blow them down to the earth. The church which you, trusting in an arm of flesh, despise, can alone give you strength in the day of battle. You have the incense of her prayers, that stand between heaven and earth, like the column and the cloud, which was a light by night and a guide by day to lead on the children of the promise in safety before their enemies, yet you say the church gives you nothing!"

"Then," cried Alonso, obstinately, for his whole reign had been marked by perpetual quarrels with the clergy, "then bid the church spiritual become the church militant. Let her arm her monks with helmets instead of hoods. Bid their crucifixes become swords of steel as well as of the spirit. Cast down thy own crook that thou holdest in thy hand, and take up yonder mace,—thou art a proper man, bishop, to bear it, —and bid the church fight for herself and defend her own possessions; for where, think you, will she be, if these infidel bloodhounds are at her throat? Think you they will spare the shepherd, when they would rifle the fold? Let the church help to maintain the war, since the war helps to guard her altars and her houses of sanctity in safety."

"Let your majesty practise the lesson you would read us," replied the bishop. "Let the royal coffers be opened to assist the necessities of the time, and ask his Holiness permission to levy tenths on those abbeys that are within the royal gift, now held by princes near the blood. Do this as an example, then propose the like to us who are dependent on none but Rome."

The extreme haughtiness of manner in which these words were spoken seemed highly offensive to the king, as he exclaimed with vehemence, "Now, as I am a king in power as well as place, think you I will do this? What, because I bow the knee and do homage to the Pope in right of his holding the keys of St. Peter, think you, therefore, I would put my own keys into his hand, for the royal coffers to become like an almsbox that shall open to the cry of every begging priest? for such would be the end of it; or would you have us, like king Denis, our dead father, who, whilst you, and all of you, revelled in luxury and lived on what as God's stewards you owed to the poor, himself pawned his own crown, in a time of scarcity, and gave the worth of it in bread to the hungry knaves who could get nothing but benisons instead of barley loaves from the church? The tenths shall be levied to help the necessities of the state. I have said it; or, if not, I will

tear off the crown from my head, shave it, and cover its bald pate with the proudest bonnet in Europe—a monk's hood! an emblem of humility, forsooth! throw down my sceptre, take up a rod, as did Henry of England, and ask on bare knees for the discipline of the church on me a penitent! This, and more than this, will I do, ere I abate one hair's weight of my kingly rule!"

"You speak in passion, sire," said the bishop; "and passion is too devoid of reason, too much allied to madness, to be answered by sober truth. It is these violent intentions to the injury of the church, that brings upon your grace the wars and miseries by which you are surrounded. You have reviled her, and, like the rod of Moses when cast on the ground, even so does your own bitter scorn thus cast upon the church rise up a serpent to your hand. Do as thou wilt, king, I will withstand thy power, I will make my appeal to Rome."

The decisive manner in which this was spoken, and the prospect that those long miseries would return, which had already nearly ruined Portugal, by the interdicts more than once laid on all the kingdom by the Pope, alarmed Azevedo. He well knew that the secular obstinacy, of Alonso and the spiritual pride of the bishop were not to be shaken, and would very likely carry on a dispute of this nature to the extremity, even though the country at large should suffer by it. He saw that Alonso was preparing a bitter and indignant answer. Anxious, therefore, to turn away wrath, the worthy statesman now interfered, and said in a conciliatory manner, "Alas! noble king, and you most reverend bishop, I beseech you both to hear a poor layman, who would come between you and wrath with those counsels of peace and love that become his age, and are sanctioned by his place."

"Speak, Azevedo," said Alonso: "we listen."

"The king," continued the venerable minister, "would rebuild his ruined castles, and, like as the ancients tell us did the phœnix of old, would make to rise again from their ashes those noble cities now destroyed by fire. He would do this by levies on the tenths of the church. To this you, Bishop of Guarda, object. Yet, think you both, I beseech you, that even whilst you dispute on the means, the thing itself is beyond your power. The Moors are up in arms. Hassan the Terrible, for so is the Talba named by Christians as well as Moslems, leads on ten thousand of his tawny hosts. Nay more, he has called in aid from the princes of Africa. The king of Fez, to revenge the oppressions of the Moors, has made a descent

on Algarva, burnt and plundered what yet remained to us of that country; and now does the Talba look for farther aid from Granada. Think of this, and rather join with me in considering the means to expel these infidels, the common enemy of Christendom. After that is done, there will be time and season to debate on the means to restore our ruined edifices of war or peace."

"There is sense in the old man's counsel," said Alonso, who was quite as well aware as Azevedo could be, of the necessity of acting thus; but the bitter enmity he entertained towards those of his clergy who had been instrumental in procuring the interdicts that had humbled him at Rome, made the king eager to seize every opportunity to vent his passion against the church, though it was often done but in vain words; for, at the date of our narrative, kings, kingdoms, and nobles, were compelled to bow the neck before Rome, whenever the sovereign pontiff, who filled the chair of St. Peter, chose to lay his foot on them, in humiliation of their power and pride. Alonso of Portugal, like Henry the third of England, in vain attempted to resist the yoke.

"What is your further counsel, my honest Azevedo?" continued the king, laying a strong emphasis on the word honest, and as strong a one on the epithet by which he immediately after designated the bishop. "Methinks even this politic father will listen to an honest man's counsel, though he be not a member of the Chapter."

The bishop probably disdained to understand the inuendo, as he replied with a Sardonic smile, "I will listen with pleasure to a counsellor whom even the king admits to be honest enough to instruct himself."

"I would counsel," said Azevedo, "that the first step should be Christian union; and that private interests and feelings be forgotten in the general good. Our arms against the infidels are weak, whilst we disagree amongst ourselves. I would offer address to your majesty's brother, Don Sanchez, a full redress of all his grievances; so that he may join his powers with the loyal chivalry of Portugal, to drive from Algarva these invaders. Unless that is done, all will go to ruin."

Alonso frowned, as he replied, "The Bastard is in open rebellion against us. He was the first man who accepted the help of the Moors; and think you we will ever be satisfied till he is dead or prisoner?"

"I am assured," said Azevedo, "that Don Sanchez had no part in calling in the assistance of these invaders from Bar-

bary. That, so it is reported at least, was the sole work of the Talba, a dangerous and brave man, who, as it now appears, has long in secret been engaged in guiding those powerful engines of destruction, which at last he has brought to act in concert."

"He is the leader of them all," said the king: "we have, by public proclamation, set such a price on the Talba's head, as we trust may tempt even some of his own people to betray him. Dead or alive, we would see that man within our power. What is thy farther counsel?"

"That there should be a perfect reconciliation between yourself, sire, and your noble son Don Pedro. He is now in arms in your cause. He comes hither this morning to render your grace an account of his late enterprise. I would conjure you to receive him kindly. To speak the truth, he awaits but my signal to enter the royal presence."

"Yet you all know how he has acted towards us," replied Alonso. "How can we consent to receive him as our son, who will not obey us as a father, who disputes our authority as a king? And then this Ines de Castro, his favourite mistress. Think of her last act! Our son knows not yet that she managed, heaven alone can tell by what means, so artfully, as to prevail on his son, the heir of his honours, of his future crown, to become lacquey to her, to assist her escape, to deceive Gonsalez who held the keys, and who, I fear, has in vain pursued her. I must break this matter to Don Pedro."

"I trust no harm will result to the young Prince Ferdinand," said Azevedo: "perhaps it might be humanity which——"

Alonso interrupted him. "And then our son Don Pedro's refusal to wed the Infanta—the dishonour he has heaped on me, who sent an embassy, sent old Manuel de Castro, to plight his faith and troth to the blooming princess. He refuses compliance; and Arragon chafes at our broken faith, as if we were the let to the very marriage we proposed! These things go nigh to madden us. Summon Don Pedro hither. Yet will we see him. Marshal him hither."

Azevedo left the tent to obey the king's order. Don Pedro immediately followed the venerable messenger; but the interview between father and son demands another chapter.

CHAPTER XXII.

—Then the king
Will, doubtless, much resent his son's refusal;
And thus we kindle the whole court against him.
Ambition is first minister of state;
Love's but a second in the cabinet.

THE BROTHERS.

During the absence of Azevedo there was a profound silence. The king looked moody and thoughtful; the bishop maintained a proud and gloomy reserve, that shewed, though the storm was lulled, it had not passed away. The Princess Mary drew somewhat nearer, that she might be ready to receive her brother, as well as to take her part in a scene, where, she fancied, she should have a deep interest to uphold—the honour of her royal and ancient house.

In a short space Azevedo returned, accompanied by Don Pedro. He was clad in a magnificent suit of armour. From respect to the king he came unhelmed; but, saving this, it was apparent by the disorder of his robe, and the dust that somewhat effaced the splendour of his arms, he was recently arrived from a distance. Don Pedro saluted Alonso with cold respect, and did not advance to meet him nearer than was absolutely necessary. The salute seemed to be paid in homage to the king: the distance and cold manner was probably intended as a mark of resentment to the father; yet, as if conscious of the important services he had rendered Alonso, by taking from his rebel brother the town of Codycera, there was in his noble demeanour and countenance that calm dignity, that lofty expression of a mind bent on great and honourable purposes, which, however incensed the king might be against him, raised in the breast of a father an involuntary feeling of pride and gratification on beholding in such a son the heir and successor to his honours.

Alonso's feelings, like those in most ardent natures, were capable of the quickest transitions, and in him they often turned to opposite extremes; so that he who, but a moment before, felt even reluctant to receive his son with common

marks of kindness, or designed to treat him coldly, now rose up and, as he embraced him, said, "Too long, Don Pedro, hast thou been estranged from thy father's sight. Thy arm has done noble service in his cause. Let thy heart, then, go with it, and dearly will Alonso repay the devotion of both to Portugal's crown. The king shall deal rewards, the father shall bless them."

Don Pedro, who was affected by a reception so different to what he had anticipated, dropped on his knees, as he reverently kissed his father's hand, and replied in a voice and manner strongly expressive of his feelings, "Sire, I have both heart and arm that will spare neither blood nor toil to do you service. I am here but to render an account of what I have done. Ere dawn, I must again be on the road to follow up the pursuit of your enemies, who advance towards the mountains of Coimbra. I am bold to use this hour, when I hail your returning love to me as a son, to open my heart before you. There is no one here present but may be trusted. Azevedo is your ancient friend and counsellor, a lover of peace and wisdom; the bishop is my confessor; and my sister, the princess, will join her voice to mine, when I would beg you to spare—" (he paused a moment from emotion, then added), "Why will you, my father, whilst I am devoted to your service, thus hardly deal by me? I have but this morning learned the imprisonment of the Lady Ines de Castro, and the circumstances of the infamous Don Diego's appeal to you in the hall of audience; I have but this day learned all, so closely have I been engaged in the pursuit of your enemies. Had I known it sooner——"

Alonso's brow darkened as his son thus openly ventured to declare the interest he felt for the unhappy Ines. The king interrupted him and exclaimed, "You say you have learned all. I doubt you have yet much to learn; since I question if your informer, whoever he may be, has told you what I can add to the account. Answer me this: Do you avow your affection for this Castilian lady?"

"I will not deny it," said Don Pedro: "my affections to her are as honourable as they are sincere."

"Hence comes, then," replied the king, "your refusal to obey our command to wed with Arragon's princess?"

Don Pedro was silent. "Even now," continued Alonso, "before one circumstance is told of your late gallant acts against our enemies, she is the theme of your discourse."

Don Pedro looked extremely agitated. He paced the tent

with hasty steps—he advanced towards the king—he paused, uttered a few words, hesitated, and then was silent.

"As I now look on you, my son," said Alonso, "thus disturbed but at her very name, by heaven I could almost credit those tales which holy men bid us believe as devoutly as Holy Writ—that there are women who deal in witchcraft in these times, as in days of old; who practise on heirs of noble houses with philters, love-charms, and spells, to win them to their purpose; else wherefore should it be that thou, son of our love, heir to our crown, the hope of our people, the idol of our men-at-arms, should thus hang thy head, like a sick girl, and sigh for thy absent toy? Hear me, Don Pedro. Answer me this. Thy love, thou sayest, is honourable — I know it to be madness; has it," continued the king, as his words seemed almost to choke him with passionate utterance, "has it carried thee on to marriage?—marriage with the daughter of a beggared Castilian, whom we ourself, at thy solicitation, saved from living by the public alms, bestowed on outcasts and vagrants?"

Don Pedro turned white as death at this home appeal, and shook with indignation at the contemptuous manner in which it was made. He drew his breath with pain; he seemed as if collecting his most impassioned thoughts to give them the most impassioned expressions, when his sister, Princess Mary, started from her seat, rushed up to him, seized him by the hand, looked imploringly in his face, and uttered a few words, in so low a tone that none but Don Pedro could hear them. Yet so deep was his passion, he did not appear even to heed her, as he endeavoured to shake her off. He raised his head, and was about to answer his father, whilst the deep flush of high and proud resentment suffused his cheek. In his expanded brow there was the openness of truth. At the very moment, however, he was about to speak, his eye met that of the bishop of Guarda. The look that the prelate fixed on him seemed to act like the wand of a magician. The charm was complete; for it bound up in silence Don Pedro's lips. Whatever he might have been about to say was lost, and not till Alonso spoke again did he so much as attempt an answer.

The king continued, "Hear, from a father's mouth, the injury—the insult, this woman, who has bewitched thy senses, has cast both on thee and me. Had she given thee notice of her condition, knowing thy infatuated love, I could have pardoned her; but, by your own avowal, you have had no tidings from herself since her imprisonment, though one of her own

damsels, her favourite Moorish maiden, was allowed to see her."

"On the honour of a prince," said Don Pedro, "I declare that I have never heard from the Lady Ines, by word or letter, since her imprisonment, nor did I know she was imprisoned till this morning. On my arrival in the camp, scarcely a minute before I came into this presence, I learnt the fatal tale."

"Then you know not by what means this woman, who herself appealed to the church, has escaped all power both secular and spiritual?"

"She is escaped then!" exclaimed Don Pedro. "Thank God she is free!"

"Your prayer will hardly be thus vehement, when you learn the means she used to effect it," said the king. "Instead of appealing to thy infatuation to aid her, she, by vile agents, by the accursed Moor in her service, tampered with the innocence of thy son, thy first-born, Prince Ferdinand, the boy of all our hopes, taught him the low mean arts of falsehood, trickery, and lying; made him practise these to effect her liberation; and in company with that boy, stole away by night: nor has either of them been heard of since, though a hot pursuit followed."

At hearing this, the agitation of Don Pedro was extreme. A sudden gleam of joy on finding the escape of Ines, became as suddenly overcast, when he learnt the manner of that escape, thus artfully coloured by the prejudice and passion of the king; for though, as his wife, he could make a great allowance for her imprudence, yet thus to bear off with her, in times so fearful, Prince Ferdinand, his eldest born, his darling son, the second heir to the crown, appeared to the proud mind of Don Pedro an act of unwarrantable assumption, in one whom he had raised from the humblest station, and who he thought now ventured to abuse the power he had given her over his affections. It appeared also the more unpardonable; as even by the king's own statement, she had the means, had she chosen to employ them, to acquaint him with her actual situation: but it seemed to his bewildered mind, that she had doubted if he would interfere to rescue her; as, instead of seeking his assistance, she had tampered with his youthful son, to make him guilty of arts and deceptions, when by a more direct course the same advantages would have been attained.

It is not in the power of tongue or pen to describe the con-

flict of feeling that possessed the mind of the proud Don Pedro, as these thoughts, with the rapidity of lightning, passed through his mind. A proneness to jealous feelings, in reference to his youthful heir, was a marked feature of his character. This Ines knew, and had sometimes even gently reproached him, in the hours of fond affection, with loving Ferdinand, the first-born of his first marriage, more than he did those children the offspring of his secret union with herself. Can it then be wondered at, though his love for Ines was still the master passion of his soul, that his suspicions closed his lips? He did not indeed utter any complaint against her, nor did he support the accusations of Alonso; yet, nevertheless, he could not on the instant plead in vindication of her conduct. There might be prudence also, in acting thus: but what a second conflict was reserved for his distracted soul, when Alonso, extreme in all he said, did, or felt, without the least preparation, without giving Don Pedro time to consider before he should reply to his proposal, and almost without suffering him to become assured it was serious, thus burst in a loud voice on the ear of his astonished son.

"Thou lovest her, thou didst say, with true honourable love. By the rood we thought it had been *par amours*, like many a gallant prince who has an eye for beauty amongst the humble demoiselles who court his attention. Thou art honourable, forsooth! If thou art married, say so,—for there be those who have whispered such a thing in our ear,—and we will have her acknowledged as thy wife; and so we may possibly win back from her the dear young heir of our blood and crown."

Don Pedro's secret trembled on his lips, as this strange proposal suddenly burst upon him. Yet he paused ere he replied. Had the king but said, but intimated, half as much before the mention of Ines de Castro's escape with his son,—nay, even now, had he but proposed it with a voice, with a manner in which there was but one tone or spark of worthy feeling, Don Pedro's better nature and firmer purpose would have triumphed. He would have cast himself at his father's feet, and avowed that the noble-minded, the lovely Ines de Castro, who had suffered all for his sake, was his wife. But the cold eye of scorn, the tone of contempt, the heartless mockery of Alonso's manner, when he offered to have her acknowledged as the wife of his son, if she were such, stung Don Pedro to the very soul, covered his brow with shame, and alarmed that selfish pride which was the great blemish of his character. He

paused; yet whilst even his half-formed resolution to acknowledge her hung in doubtful balance, as if completely to destroy it, the evil genius of Ines de Castro spoke in the person of the Princess Mary, for long had it animated her heart, against the unhappy lady.

"My brother, sire," said the princess, addressing the king, "may have had his affections seduced by the arts of beauty; but you wrong him. Think you that Don Pedro, noble in mind as in blood—that he, who rejects the hand of a princess, would expose himself to become the vulgar laugh, the sneer of meaner men, that they might point at him as the husband of one who, in times past, tied the shoe-latchet and held up the train of his deceased Constantia? He would not put such shame upon her memory, could he even forget what is due to his own honour."

Men of sensitive minds and a proud spirit, who would not hesitate to thrust down the throat of another man, at the point of the sword, any direct insult offered to them, often shrink back cowed and overawed by the apprehension of ridicule or scorn. This was a failing in Don Pedro, and his sister knew it. In cold blood, therefore, she had used a weapon which she knew would pierce to the quick her proud-minded and irresolute brother. He had no courage to resist. Forgetful of all but his own pride, to save that the infliction of a momentary wound, he, by his silence, cruelly betrayed the interests and the just rights of his affectionate wife; and, by avoiding an avowal of his marriage when called upon to make it, left his father to form the most injurious opinion of the unfortunate Ines.

Scarcely had Don Pedro recovered from the smart of his sister's stinging speech, and the shame he felt at the yielding and unworthy part he had played in this scene, when a trumpet sounded without the tent, and startled the ear of all who were within it. "See who waits there," said the king, as he rung a handbell that stood on the table, to summom his attendant officer.

"Whose trumpet is that?" inquired the king, of the chamberlain who now entered.

"May it please your grace," he replied, "a messenger from the master of the Wing is without. He is breathless with spurring and speed: scarcely could he find breath enough to tell me that he had letters of import from his master, the Count of Amiranti. He was charged to deliver them to no one but your grace."

"Marshal him hither," said the king; "I doubt not he

comes with the intelligence of some new revolt. These are times full of falsehood and dangers, that follow on each other as regularly as do the hours of the day. Welcome, Vincent Ameray. What news from the gallant Count? Good or evil, give them up."

"May it please your grace," said Vincent Ameray, dropping on his knee, and presenting a packet he took from his bosom, "this will speak my news. I was charged to deliver them into the hand of no one but your grace; yet so far am I trusted in the confidence of my noble master, that you will find me able to reply to any questions your grace may be pleased to demand in further explanation. None but myself, saving the Count's bosom friends, know the matter this letter will communicate to your grace."

"We trust thou hast discretion, Vincent," said the king; "else we would tax our master of the Wing with wanting prudence. Now, packet, give up thy contents—thus we break the seal."

The king read, with a hasty glance, the usual form of greeting. This done, his attention suddenly became fixed, his brows were knit, a flush overspread his cheek; he read farther, and at length exclaimed, "Holy saints of heaven! what is this?" As he now continued to read, his eyes seemed riveted on the paper, his lips were compressed together, and his strong muscular hand, that looked as if it would wield the club of Hercules with ease, shook as it grasped a thing so light as the letter he had just received.

"Some strange emotion disturbs the king," whispered Azevedo to Don Pedro.

"I doubt ill news," answered the prince: "I never saw my father thus moved at any common calamity of war. But see, he is about to speak."

Alonso did so, as he held up the paper in one hand, and struck it with the other: "Here is the snake!" he exclaimed, with fury in his looks and gestures. "Here it shews itself in the full eye of day! Here, in all its venom, in all the windings of its devious path, as it crawls the earth to steal along and sting us into madness. All is unfolded. Here is shewn the faith of the mistress of your besotted fancy; Ines de Castro has given up Prince Ferdinand as a hostage to the rebel Moors!"

A cry of horror issued from every lip. All, saving Don Pedro, uttered some exclamation; but he, unable to support this sudden blow, staggered, and fell upon the couch that was near him.

"Support the prince," said Azevedo; and he hastened to offer such succour as his age would admit. The Princess Mary hastily advanced. There was a hideous expression of triumph and of malice in her countenance as she went up to her brother, and, devoid of all pity at the sight of those agonies that seemed to bear him down to the very earth, whispered in his ear (like Lady Macbeth to her husband, and almost in her very words, when reproaching Macbeth for giving way to the terrors of his mind), "Shame on thee, Don Pedro! brother, be a man."

"I am—I will act as a man," replied Don Pedro, as he started from the couch. "I will not believe this. Give me the letter." He snatched it from the ground, where Alonso, in passion, had cast it at his feet; and, as if still doubtful, Don Pedro read and re-read it, to be assured his senses told him truth. He then rose up, uttered not a word, and like one who wanders in his sleep, without seeming conscious that he was in the presence of others, appeared, from his hasty strides, as if about to leave the tent. The bishop of Guarda and Azevedo both rushed towards him; for, hurrying question after question upon the amazed Vincent, who could scarcely find breath to keep pace with the king in the answers he required, they observed Alonso was giving way to that furious mood, which, when it once possessed him, flowed on in passion like a torrent that had burst its bounds.

"Whither go you, prince?" said Azevedo. "For your father's, for all our sakes, arm yourself with patience. Hear the king. Do not leave him thus. Whither go you?"

"No matter," answered Don Pedro. "Leave me, old man; do not hang thus on my cloak. Let me go; I will not be detained. Unhand me; or, by heaven, I will pass on by force."

"Say but where you go?" exclaimed the bishop. "See! Don Pedro, the king would speak with you!"

Don Pedro paused; and, as he turned about to confront his father, there was in his pale countenance an expression of shame that mingled itself with the stern energy of his feelings. He could not meet Alonso's eye, so much did he think himself even humbled by the supposed unworthy, ungrateful conduct of the dearest object of his devoted love. Death, the most cruel (so thought he at this moment), would have been mercy compared to that blow, so struck at his feelings by Ines, the wife of his bosom. He hung down his head, as Alonso asked him what was his purpose in thus hastily quitting the tent.

"To recover my son," replied Don Pedro; "I will liberate him, or perish."

"Madman!" exclaimed Alonso, who was as coarse in his expressions as he was hasty in the moody fits of passion that inspired them; "you rush on certain death. The child of our hopes, the noble Ferdinand, is immured within a strong fortress in the mountains, whence, so writes the master of the Wing, the Moors were about to remove him to some unknown concealment. I will save him. I have bethought me of the means to save him. Listen, then, ere you depart."

Don Pedro bowed his head in silence, as he stood anxiously expecting what the king was about to propose.

"It appears from this letter," continued Alonso, "that the Count of Amiranti made prisoner Hamet, the son of Alcanzor, that Moorish youth whom we banished, on pain of death, our kingdom. The Count took the youth prisoner in a wild sally which Hamet made from the fortress. He was about to execute the sentence of death so merited on this Moor, when comes a letter from one of high authority in the fortress, declaring, that the very hour Hamet—the vile traitor, the banished slave—should suffer the just sentence of our broken laws, that same hour—my blood boils while I but speak it—our grandchild, the noble Ferdinand, should also perish like a common felon, by the accursed hand of infidel Moors. To save Ferdinand, the master of the Wing has spared Hamet, and now holds him as an honourable prisoner of war. Thus are we defied to our very teeth."

"The master of the Wing acted wisely, sire," said Azevedo. "There was no choice."

"He did so," answered Alonso. "But now hear our determination; for the Count of Amiranti demands our pleasure as regards his prisoner. We will have Hamet brought hither to us; ay, to us; we will ourself be his keeper; and our royal proclamation shall go forth—it shall be sent by envoys, bearing the coward and white-faced flag of truce, to our rebel brother's army, and to every Moorish host shall it go abroad, that, unless within three days prince Ferdinand be restored to our hands, Hamet shall daily endure the torture, the sharp and agonising torture, limb by limb; nor will we spare him one pang, till Prince Ferdinand be given to our bosom. This done, Ferdinand ours, we will forbear to torture Hamet; he shall have life and liberty. Not a hair of Hamet's head shall be harmed, if Ferdinand be restored; but if detained, not a day, not an hour, will we spare the Moorish boy those tortures that shall end but in death."

"Think you, sire, this will avail for the recovery of the

young Prince Ferdinand?" said Azevedo. "Surely to torture a brave and exiled foe, though he was taken in arms against you, which I admit merits the doom of death, were unworthy your great name. Death would be justice, torture cruelty."

"Peace, old man!" said the king; "come not between me and my just resentment. You know not the wrath of kings; it is like that of the hunted lion, which spares not the foe that falls within its grasp. What I purpose, will I know avail. The Moors love with a wild devotion this Hamet, whom they consider the last of their native princes of Portugal. I wish not to torture the boy; it may be a threat more than a purpose: and if, after this, we but subdue the Talba, these villanous infidels will fall before our swords, or fly from them, like the skulking fox from the hounds in pursuit. The Talba is their soul, their breath. He gives them spirit, action, life; leads them on to burn our cities, and to overthrow our towns. Without him, they are but curs, base infidel dogs; but with him, they are fiends, armed with fire and sword from hell; more than men of common limbs and thews. Hassan subdued, and all were well."

"Yet even were it so," said Don Pedro, "I might not recover my son from the hands of these cruel Moors." He paused a moment, considered, and then added, as if some sudden thought occurred to his mind, "I will do it. Near the mountain-pass of Coimbra, Don Sanchez is encamped. May be he holds my son Ferdinand in his keeping. He may even now detain him as a hostage. I will send an embassy to my rebel uncle; and possibly he will restore the youth on my resigning to him, by way of ransom, the disputed city of Codecyra, which so lately I have retaken from Don Sanchez for the king."

"Follow thy own purpose," said Alonso; "be it what it may, it cannot choose but be loyal. Yet beware, Don Pedro, beware of that woman, who, as the syrens of old were said to do by the heedless mariner, will lure thee to destruction. Dare not to answer; I will not hear a word in her behalf."

"I have not one to offer," said Don Pedro; yet he spoke in so low a voice, it did not reach the ear of Alonso; and advancing to the king, he hastily bade his father farewell, waved his hand to his hard-hearted sister, and then retired from the tent, followed by his friend the bishop of Guarda.

"We will give orders to issue our royal proclamation," said the king, "and forthwith write to the master of the Wing, charging him that, ere to-morrow's sun be set, he send us his prisoner Hamet, the son of Alcanzor."

"But, I trust, sire," said Azevedo, "you will not execute on that unhappy youth your dreadful purpose. Think, he is a Moor, not a Christian. His conduct, therefore, in fairness, must not be judged by the measure of our pure religion. Consider also, that possibly he thought he did but his duty in this wild attempt to avenge his father's death. I would beseech you, for your own honour, sire, for the sake of that faith, which, compared to his, is as light to darkness, to spare him the torture."

"Not a limb, not a joint, but shall feel iron and wrenching steel," said the stubborn king, "unless Prince Ferdinand, the promise of our house, be restored in safety." And with this remark the reckless king dismissed Azevedo, as he prepared to issue his orders.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I will instruct my sorrows to be proud;
For grief is proud, and makes his owner stout.
SHAKSPEARE.

We must now return to the unhappy Ines de Castro, taking up the thread of our narrative on the day after she had so alarming an interview with Don Diego. Nothing is more certain than that persons who have lived in an uninterrupted state of prosperity can scarcely be said to know themselves, or of what measure of endurance and exertion they are capable, till the test of adversity is applied to their character, like fire to gold, purifying it of all dross, and leaving it refined and ductile, ready to take whatever impress the master-hand of Providence may be pleased to fix upon it. Man in prosperity may be good, but it is in adversity he becomes great: like the anchoring bark, which, as she rides in the light, on calm seas, may be an object of beauty; yet when she sails amid wild and tempestuous billows assailing her on every side, then is it that we contemplate her as a thing in which there is grandeur and sublimity, for then is she a spectacle that speaks the triumph of men above the war of elements.

The character of Ines de Castro had hitherto scarcely been developed. At a very early age, the devoted love of the prince Don Pedro, the adulation of a court, and that syren voice—flattery (which whispered in her ear, that she was the loveliest of her sex; and who can wonder at it? for, amiable as she was, she still was human), had in a great degree dazzled her mind and obscured her better judgment. Thus had she first been tempted to break a solemn contract, though given to one certainly unworthy of her; and lulled by visions like these, had never contemplated, even as within the verge of possibility, her present forlorn condition. To her was the change as great, as sudden and unexpected, as to the mariner, who sometimes rises at morn the lord of a proud vessel, which bears him and his fortunes wherever his will directs; but who ere night finds it a shattered hulk, and himself, perhaps, but the shipwrecked tenant of a barren rock. It was now, when

prosperity had withdrawn her golden light, and adversity shrouded her in clouds of darkness, that Ines rose as much in her character as she sank in her fortunes. She felt her fortitude equal to meet danger, and hoped her prudence would guide her through difficulty, whilst her faith taught her to place her chief confidence in Providence.

No sooner had Don Diego left her, than falling on her knees before God, she fervently invoked the protection of the Almighty, accompanying her prayers with those addresses to the Virgin and saints of heaven, that in her day formed a constituent part of Christianity. This done, instead of giving way to soft complaints and hopeless sorrows, she summoned all her resolution to her aid, and determined, whatever might be the consequence, she would make the attempt to recover her liberty. Driven by circumstances so desperate that she never could have foreseen them, as the last hope to preserve her honour, she had declared herself a wedded wife to Don Diego. He had instantly guessed to whom, and she neither did nor could attempt to deny the truth of his conjecture. Her marriage then to the heir of Portugal's crown no longer was a secret. This she knew was a thing of so much consequence, that even the very rebels and malcontents, who were leagued with Don Diego, must feel some awe, some hesitation to connive at the misusage of her who, should Don Pedro ascend the throne, would hereafter be a queen. The public avowal of her marriage might, it was true, occasion her being kept a prisoner to obtain her ransom, or to stipulate for advantageous conditions ere they restored her to liberty, should the fortune of war compel them to seek conditions: yet even this circumstance, perhaps, was in her favour; as though they would the more carefully guard her, she was certain of being sheltered both from insult and violence.

The more Ines thought of this, the stronger became her resolution to trust the first humane person she could meet in the fortress with a knowledge of her real situation. She now recollected that, on the night she was brought into her prison, a female Moor had been desired to attend on her if her health or necessities required it. The sight of one whom she apprehended must be leagued with Diego and Gonsalez had then given her more pain than hope, as she expected nothing but harsh treatment from such an attendant, and she had been well instructed in the prejudices of the age to think all Moors, unless, like her Ximena, they became Christians, no better than infidels, given over to a reprobate mind. But now that

the conduct of Don Diego had driven her to extremities, she remembered this person, with an ardent desire to see her again. Moor though she was, yet still she was woman, and in the female breast Ines thought there would be something more capable of being softened to pity than in the heart of man, especially if, like Diego, he called himself a Christian, but without proving himself such by any worthy act.

Ines determined, therefore, to watch her opportunity; and, lest she should betray her purpose to her jealous enemies, painful as the effort might be, she waited, without a murmur, till that hour when it was usual to send the person who acted as sewer of the fortress to bring her some refreshment. When the sewer entered, she conducted herself in the most calm and collected manner, and made him, as usual, taste of the food and drink of the wine, provided for her, before she partook of either. This done, she said that she desired to see the female Moor who was ordered to render her any necessary service, pleading, in excuse, indisposition; a thing which her pale and harassed looks confirmed.

During the interval that ensued, the hours of the day seemed to creep on with a lagging foot; for sorrow and anxiety of mind number minutes as misers do their gold. Sometimes would the unhappy Ines pace her chamber in listening expectation for a foot-fall ascending the steps; at others she would sit musing, lost in thought, or transported far beyond the walls of her prison, where her husband—her beloved husband, and her innocent children, were circled round her in fond affection; till, on raising her head, the sight of the naked walls in which she was immured, and from whose narrow confines there appeared no hope to escape the machinations of the infamous Diego, would chill her heart, and drive her to thoughts bordering on despair. Then would her better purpose to resist them return upon her in full force, and, starting from her seat, she would stand, fixed as a statue, before her casement, which commanded a view of the inner court, towers, and ramparts of the fortress. She would look on them, yet with that listless gaze which sees without understanding, almost without being conscious of the objects upon which it is fixed. Twilight was falling over the weather-beaten towers of the castle, that rose darkly against a sky in which the dying light of day was fast fading before the approaching night. The deep hollows and ravines of the surrounding scene were already wrapped in impenetrable gloom, but the high and sharp summit of the mountain, like a lofty

spirit which is bright to the last, when all beneath its own elevation lies overpowered or obscured, still glittered with a ruddy glow caught from the rays of the departing sun. The solemn stillness of the hour, alone broken by the moaning and whistling of the wind as it wandered amid the old and vaulted chambers, acted, perhaps unconsciously, on the mind of Ines; a degree of awe stole over her melancholy feeling, as she looked without on a scene full of grandeur and of vastness, but whose monotony was unbroken even by one cheering circumstance of nature.

As she thus stood before the casement, a slight noise, followed by the turning of a key in the lock of her door, startled her. She was alarmed, though she had longed for interruption; and even by the very turning of the key, which was slow and deliberate, she felt somewhat assured it was not Don Diego; so acute are the faculties of the unhappy in detecting the slightest indications connected with their hopes or fears. The door was gently opened, and the noble, matronly figure of Aza Anzurez, that was never seen without exciting attention, presented itself before the eyes of Ines, whose bosom fluttered, with not unpleasing solicitude, as she beheld in the Moor so much that excited involuntary respect, by her commanding air, her expressive eye, and the firm but open character of her features.

Aza Anzurez closed the door of the chamber with care, and, till this was done, neither intimated by word nor action that she was even conscious of the presence of the Lady Ines. But no sooner was she assured that no eye could observe her from without, than she advanced towards Ines with an expression of the deepest reverence, and according to the custom of her people when they salute a superior, threw herself before her feet, pressed her hands upon her forehead, and bowed down to the very earth.

"What is this," said Ines, extremely surprised, and not immediately comprehending the purpose of such a humiliating prostration. "Alas! Moor, do you come to mock my misery with paying homage to the captive, of whose liberty you hold the keys?"

"Mock thee, lady!" replied Aza, as see looked up to Ines, but did not rise from the earth. "Forgive me if I have surprised you; but she who could save Hamet from a cruel death, when driven into the arena by the persecution of an unrelenting king, she hath a heart capable of every generous feeling, and will not therefore disdain the grateful homage

paid by a mother. Lady, to thee do I owe a debt never to be cancelled."

"Art thou then," replied Ines, "the mother of that gallant youth who so intrepidly encountered, in the arena of Cintra, the mountain bull?"

"I am his sorrowing mother," said Aza; "for he is even now in the bonds of his enemies. Cassim told me, lady, who thou wert, the very night you came hither in so much distress; but, till now, I have been denied seeing you; and fearful lest I should never gain access to this chamber to express my grateful feelings, I have not dared utter to man the interest I took in the deliverer of my son. I fear me, lady, you have those within these walls who would deny you all, save the dictates of their own will. I fear they deal by you with a hard hand."

"They do so, in truth," said Ines. "Rise, noble Moor: I thank God that for thy sake I was made the instrument to save thy gallant son. My own distress, and the dangers with which I am threatened, make me bold to demand of you that help which, alas! I must not hope to find in those who profess a Christian's creed, whilst they do acts that would disgrace a heathen. To thy generous bosom I will confide the knowledge of my sad story. May be in thee God has sent me a deliverer, if not a sympathising friend, whose counsel may aid me in this extremity."

"Doubt it not, lady," replied Aza: "Allah can raise up the meanest creature to give comfort to the noblest when the hour is most dark, even as he caused the waters of Zemzem to rise sparkling from the arid sand, to refresh our father Ismael, when Hagar had laid down her son to die in the desert land. Aza will aid thee, if her weak hand or her true heart can do aught to requite the preserver of her child."

"Know then," continued Ines, "that the unhappy woman who now seeks aid at thy hand may one day thank thee as becomes a queen, should her hard fortunes change to better hopes. I am the wife, the wretched wife of Pedro, prince of Portugal; the mother of two helpless babes."

"Lady," said Aza, "thy unhappy marriage is no secret to me. I know thy sorrows, and to thy sad fortunes I am not a stranger."

Ines, in surprise, exclaimed, at hearing this, "You fill my mind with wonder! That my melancholy tale, that my marriage is no secret to one of thy people, well do I know. Hassan, the Talba, is acquainted with it; yet by what means it came to his knowledge is past all conjecture, since my fatal

secret was kept sacred from the ear of man; nay, so much did Don Pedro fear his father's wrath, that our children have been held in concealment almost from light and air. He thought no one knew of our ill-starred union, saving the bishop of Guarda, and my faithful Ximena. True it is, that but this day, driven to extremity by the violence of Don Diego, I avowed myself wedded; he guessed to whom. Has Diego, then, confided it to thee?"

"No lady," said Aza, "he confided nothing to me, the knowledge of which could do you service. He told me, the day after your arrival, that you were his affianced bride; complained of unjust treatment, broken faith; and declared his resolution never to resign his betrothed wife. I will tell you by what means the secret of your marriage became known to Hassan, as well as to the mother of Hamet. During one of those affrays that have lately taken place between Moor and Christian, one of our people, who was true to Don Pedro, and had forsworn the faith of his fathers, became a prisoner to the Moors. He was strictly examined, as it appeared he was on his road to bear letters to Don Pedro. These were seized, and brought to the Talba. Hassan, deeming they might contain intelligence vital to the cause of the Moors, opened them. The first he found to be a letter of thine, written from thy prison. It told the fate which awaited thee; conjured a husband to hasten to thy relief; spoke of thy children: it told thou wast the wedded wife of Don Pedro, to whom thy earnest supplication was addressed. Think not, lady, that Hassan would have detained a letter such as this, though thy husband be his enemy; but there was no time to convey it, so that it could have reached thy lord to procure thee his aid in the hour of danger; for the messenger, who bore thy letter, had been many days a prisoner ere these things came to the knowledge of the Talba, and thy fate would have been sealed within twenty-four hours after, by the severe laws of thy own Christian church."

"Hassan, then," said Ines, "contrived the plan for my deliverance, which has since been frustrated by the base Diego?"

"The Talba did so in the hope to save thee," replied Aza; "for never could Don Pedro have known thy distress till it was too late to help thee. Hassan remembered thy Moorish damsel, Ximena, and by her means the plan was communicated to Ferdinand the young prince."

"To save me from death!" said Ines; "but for Diego, who waylaid our steps, I should now have been restored to my husband and my poor children. Yet how could Diego, or his

friend in iniquity Gonsalez, know of my escape? The grateful Hassan would never have betrayed me into the power of Diego."

"He would rather have betrayed his own life, so far can I vouch for him," replied Aza; "by what means Don Diego knew of your escape, or waylaid your path, is unknown to me; nor have I seen the Talba since the night before he left this fortress to hasten to Cintra, solely to contrive the means for thy deliverance; for it was whilst journeying hither that thy danger became known to him. The Talba swore by the Prophet's tomb that he would not draw a sword in our cause till he had attempted to save her who preserved Hamet from death in the arena."

"Generous man!" said Ines. "Oh, that I could prove myself grateful! But, alas! I am again a prisoner, and have more to dread than in my former captivity. Then I feared but death, now dishonour."

"It cannot be," said Aza, "that those who have used you thus would dare further wrong."

"You know them not," answered Ines: "believe me, they who have dared thus much will dare more; they will not pause in violence. Aza, beyond this night I have no hope of respite. To-morrow Don Diego comes again. He has laid before me a dreadful alternative—dishonour—such as I will not name—or a fate so terrible that even to me it is yet veiled in darkness. I know his purpose to be fixed, and the malice of Gonsalez to be deadly. Unless by your means I can escape these walls, death is the only choice left me to avoid dishonour. To-morrow it will be too late."

"How can I aid you?" said Aza: "my own life I would freely peril for your sake; but you know not by what a chain I am bound to the interests of these men. If I break but a link of it, Hamet may perish, for he is——"

Ines interrupted her with energy: she dreaded to find the least hesitation in Aza Anzurez at such a crisis. "Oh, as you are a mother," she exclaimed, "feel for me. Do not let fear render cold a generous purpose. You have been a wife; you, like myself, have carried in your maternal breast the dear pledges of a holy love. Pity me, then; think what it is to live in shame; to be so debased that a wife would rather look on death, in his most loathed abode of worms and darkness, than meet the eye of a dishonoured husband! dishonoured by violence, whilst to him her faith was true, and his honour was dearer to her soul than the breath of life. Think, too, of my children! Never more must I behold their pretty looks: never

more must I fold them to this anxious breast. Nay, never more will their innocence receive the blessing of a mother if she falls into shame: I could not look on them and live."

"Your words would move a heart of stone to pity," said Aza, "though they may not touch the tenfold hardness that steels the breast of your enemies. Yet how can I aid you?"

"You can, you will find a way to do it," replied Ines: "you are my keeper; the keys of this prison are in your hand. There are many of your own people within the fortress: from this window have I more than once remarked the deep reverence with which they salute the noble Aza. Thou wilt find a means to deliver me and Ferdinand."

"I may not deliver the young prince," said Aza; "for know, lady, my own son, Hamet, is a prisoner to that fierce man who has sworn to dip his sword in Moorish blood—the master of the Wing. For the present, Hamet is preserved: he was snatched from the very grasp of death by Prince Ferdinand becoming a hostage for his life. Ask not, then, a mother to give up him whose security is as necessary to the preservation of her son as the breath of his nostrils, or the bread that sustains it."

"Alas!" said Ines, "I knew not that it was so. Yet I trust the prince is in no danger, beyond the suffering of a brief captivity. He must be ransomed, and that almost on any conditions you may please to annex to it for Hamet's safety."

"Prince Ferdinand," answered Aza, "is a prisoner under my care: those who brought him hither deemed no one would so surely keep him as the mother who knew the existence of her child depended on his security. Yet I have been kind to the noble boy. Trust me, lady, thy Christian prince has lacked no tender nurture from my hand. Whilst with jealous care I have watched him with a gaoler's eye, yet I pitied his youth, his innocent distress. And I have endeavoured to soothe his mind, to supply his wants, as I would have done by Hamet in captivity."

"I doubt it not," said Ines; "and I trust in that Power who has so given him into your hand to deliver the boy when his freedom shall be without danger to thy son. Yet my liberty cannot prejudice him; and the dangers that threaten me are sudden, instant: thou wilt think of some means to aid me."

Aza paused ere she replied. For some time she seemed to meditate; at length she said, "Should I devise the only means that seem to me to give thee a chance of liberty, wouldst thou have courage to adventure? For, I promise thee, it will be full of danger."

"I will meet it, be it what it may," said Ines: "place danger before me, armed with death, clad in all the terrors that can appal the heart of man, and though I am woman, weak, timid by nature, tenderly bred to shrink from pain and evil, yet, my honour safe, my faith inviolate to him who is lord of my heart and hand, I feel that within me which gives the strong assurance, I have courage equal to the encounter. Be the means what they may, I will never waver: this hour I would embrace them."

"Not this hour," said Aza: "midnight must hide thy flight. Yet I trust in Allah that the darkness which shrouds thee from thy cruel enemies will be as light to direct the paths of thy feet. Lady, there is within this fortress a Moor whom I dare trust. He is rough; it may be, stubborn in his nature, but he is devoted to Hamet; and, like the Talba, I will venture my life on his fidelity to her who saved my son from a dreadful fate. You know not our people when resentment or gratitude is the spring of action within them."

"Yet if this Moor is, as you say, thus stubborn," observed Ines, "perhaps he will not——"

Aza interrupted her: "Fear him not, lady: he is a Moor, a fiery son of Ismael. But know, those climes whence he derives his race, that have given to our outward skin hues intense and sultry as an autumn's sun, have also filled our souls with the kindling fire of gratitude. We confine not our thanks to cold words, nor even to holy prayers. Acts, acts of daring and of peril, these speak the Moorish heart when it would requite a benefactor. This man will be true to thee in life or death."

"And by what means," said Ines, "do you propose to do this act of mercy, to rescue the unhappy Ines?"

"Ask me not now," said Aza; "each moment becomes precious. I have not one to lose. I will do what the spirit of good, who watches over thy destiny for deliverance, suggests to me. I must hence, to prepare all things. At midnight, I will return. Do thou, meanwhile, endeavour to take rest. Thou wilt need strength of body, as well as of mind, to pass through those perils that must be encountered. At midnight I will return. And this chamber, when the light of morning next looks through yonder casement, shall be void; that light shall fall on the captive's pillow, whilst her head knows no prison-roof, no canopy, saving that of the free heavens. At midnight I will come; till then, peace be in thy soul, and balm in thy slumbers."

CHAPTER XXIV.

By how much unexpected, by so much
We must awake endeavour for defence:
For courage mounteth with occasion.
SHAKSPEARE.

BEFORE the expected hour of midnight, Ines had forsaken her couch, where she had endeavoured to take rest, to recruit her spirits to bear those toils and difficulties which Aza Anzurez had assured her would be the companions of her escape, though she knew not yet by what means it could be effected. There was no light in her apartment; for Aza, fearful of creating the least suspicion, had determined on no account again to enter the prison-chamber till the hour in which she hoped to effect the captive's deliverance.

Ines arose, however; and, by such light as was afforded by a moon over whose face hazy clouds were successively flitting, endeavoured to make such preparations as she best could to leave the fortress. She wrapped her large mantle around her, bound her silken coif close over her hair, and threw on a veil which was calculated to conceal her features as well as to protect her from the night air. She next endeavoured to take some refreshment, for it had not been removed on the previous evening; and having done this, she spent a considerable portion of the time that yet remained to her in fervent addresses to heaven, that she might pass in safety from this prison of danger and dishonour. She arose strengthened and refreshed. For what can so effectually restore the mind to its natural tone as the united influence of hope and religious trust?

Yet every moment which now intervened appeared an age to her suspense: sometimes she fancied Aza might be disappointed in her expected plan; at others, she feared the Moor would not come; and again she felt that contest of hope and fear which is experienced by the criminal who awaits the sentence of his judge. Certainty, in any shape, she felt would be a relief. But when at length she heard the bell of the castle proclaim the midnight hour, her expectation became intense; and she stood, scarcely breathing, as she counted stroke after stroke, till the number twelve was completed, and the last dull

sound died away on the hollow winds, which in these mountainous regions have always a melancholy cadence.

So intense was her anxiety, that she dared not move from the spot, where she stood leaning against the wall by the casement, her eye and ear fixed in attentive observance of the door, that door which she now looked upon as the portal of deliverance. For some time she listened: not a sound came; and as her alarms gradually rose higher than her hopes, her heart palpitated with thick beatings, and her countenance, that had in it an expression of agonised anxiety, looked, as the cold light of the moon shone through the window upon it, as still and as white as that of a marble statute representing the passion of despair.

At length her ear caught a sound, a slight sound as from a distance. It came nearer. Some one moved cautiously along. She felt assured that steps now approached her chamber. Every nerve in her body seemed at this instant to have a distinct life of its own. So acute were her feelings, and so much did she tremble, that she could scarcely stand. A light gleamed under the door, and shot its long rays upon the floor. A key turned; she shuddered lest the slight noise it made should create alarm. The door opened, and Aza Anzurez entered, bearing a lamp, which she shadowed with her hand, that looked blood-red by its transparency as it intercepted the beams of so strong a flame.

Aza was followed by a Moor, whose attire shewed he was ready for departure: his turban, of a dark red cloth, was bound close round his forehead. The cynical expression of his eye, never at any time pleasing, did not escape the observation of Ines. He was armed with a dagger, and a cimeter hung from his belt. In his hand he carried a riding wand. A scrip, or wallet, was fastened across his shoulders, while a gypsire, which hung as if to balance his dagger on the other side his girdle, looked well filled.

"Has your heart failed you, lady?" said Aza Anzurez: "you look white as the lily of the field."

"No," replied Ines: "I feared you would not come. I shall be well anon, and able to go with you. I will but rest me for a moment, till I may so far recover myself to tread with a firm step. Give me to drink of yonder water."

Aza pointed to the door, which Cassim, the Moor who attended her, instantly closed, as she gave Ines a goblet of water, and thus addressed her, whilst the fair prisoner sat for a few minutes to recover from her agitation: "This Moor, lady,

Cassim by name, was a faithful follower of my deceased lord Alcanzor; nor did he desert the widow of his prince in her fallen fortunes. In my exile he attended as herdsman to my flocks. True to me and mine, doubt not he will be so to thee. Fear him not, therefore, but trust him; for the brave and the faithful are ever the honourable."

Ines, in a few words, expressed her thanks, and the confidence she reposed in the Moor destined to be her guide.

"Now, lady," continued Aza, "say where you would have him conduct you. Some place of shelter, I trust, will be found not far distant; since, in times like these, the ways and paths of the mountains are full of danger."

"I fear nothing but the pursuit of Don Diego," said Ines.

"Fear him not," answered Aza; "he shall not know the road you have taken, when he discovers your escape."

"But your safety after this generous act?" said Ines. "Alas! how selfish have I been in my own desire for liberty, to forget the peril you must run to deliver me; or, possibly, you bear me company?"

"No," said Aza; "did I do so, it might be thought that, to ensure the life of Hamet, I was about to become a traitor to those within this fortress. I fear not Don Diego, for he is desirous to draw from me a promise never to betray to Christian ears that he brought hither Prince Ferdinand as a prisoner with yourself. When I tell him that I gave you liberty, to save you from his power, however angry he may feel, yet will he fear to provoke me. Think not of him; leave me to answer such as Diego. Rather say where you would go for shelter, when you leave these walls."

"To the monastery of Santa Clara at Coimbra," said Ines; "there I shall be safe. Come hither, Aza, and to thy friendly ear will I whisper wherefore I would seek the walls of Santa Clara."

Aza Anzurez bent her head, whilst in a whisper Ines de Castro confided to her the cause which in particular induced her to bend her steps towards Santa Clara, a confidence she could not speak aloud in the presence of Cassim. Whatever it was, it was told in few words, and Aza pressed the hand of Ines, as she bowed her head in token of approval. "It is well," she said aloud, "Coimbra is but a few leagues hence; you will reach it before to-morrow at noon. Are you ready?"

"Yes," replied Ines, "I will now commit myself to the faithful guidance of yonder Moor, and should better times come, the friends who delivered the unhappy Ines de Castro

from these walls will find she is capable of gratitude. Thy reward, Cassim, shall be as large as it is well deserved."

"Lady," said Cassim, "the reward is not deserved till the service it would recompense is done. I am but one man, and we must pass through these mountains that are beset with enemies. I may not promise to fulfil your wishes, but I will attempt it."

"It is all I can desire," said Ines; "thy success rests in God's will. I am ready."

"Follow me, then," cried Aza. "There is in this fortress, lady, a subterranean passage, by tradition known to us Moors: it is now half choked up by time and decay, and in such a ruinous condition, that had it been known to yonder Master of the Wing, he might, perhaps, have surprised the castle even by those very means once intended for its safety. It issues near a mountain pass that lies in the direction of the city to which you desire to journey. By this I can conduct you, and by no other; for you are lost did you but attempt to pass the gates."

"Go on," said Ines; "I fear nothing, generous Aza. May God reward you for this act, by guiding you to know his truth! When we next meet—if meet we ever shall again—may you be Christian!"

"The wish is kindly meant, I doubt not," replied Aza; "since those who deem they follow truth cannot desire a nobler thing in requital to another, than a knowledge of it. But think not thus of Aza Anzurez. Your Christian priests have taught you that the law of Mahomet says women have not a soul for Paradise. It is a false tongue that teaches thus. The Moslem woman hopes for happiness beyond the grave, where none but the virtuous may drink of the fountains of Salsabil, whose sides are of camphire, and whose pebbled bed is of jewels more precious than rubies, and whiter than ocean's pearls. Think not, then, that Aza would desert the faith of her fathers, and cast it off as the reptile does its skin. A daughter of Ismael may not change her faith."

"Then," said Ines, as she arose to follow Aza, who was preparing to lead the way, "may heaven, for the sake of thy good deed, forgive thy erring faith! May God bless thee and thine!"

Aza now stood without the chamber, and extended her hand to Ines to lead her down the winding stairs. "All sleeps within the castle," she said, in a low voice; "lady, be thy step noiseless as the camel's foot."

Swift, yet cautious, was their descent, and they soon found themselves within the hall of the castle, as it was necessary to cross it in order to proceed to another part of the old building. The rays of the lamp were insufficient to shew perfectly the extent of this gloomy and ancient apartment, though they gleamed on many a coat of mail, helmet and haubergeon, lance and spear, that hung upon the walls. A row of massive columns stood on each side, and supported the roof. It was with a feeling of dreadful apprehension that Ines saw glide from behind one of these pillars a dusky figure, armed, as if on the watch. The lamp shewed him to be a Moor.

"Fear not," said Aza, who saw Ines shudder and draw back; "it is Zegris, the faithful Zegris. He was the banner-bearer of Alcanzor, and with him the word of Alcanzor's widow is a command, be it for life or death. He expects us: he is the guard to-night within the fortress, and will assist in your escape."

As she spoke, Zegris, who seemed to watch the slightest indication of Aza's will, came forward and joined Cassim. They crossed the hall and several vaulted passages, till at length they entered within a small tower at the extremity of the building.

"Look at yonder door," said Aza; "thence we descend."

It required the united strength of Cassim and Zegris to open this door, as Aza carefully held the lamp. This done, she bade the latter light torches which he had in readiness. He obeyed, and was the first to descend the steep, narrow, and broken flight of steps, that went, as it were, into the very bowels of the earth. Aza took Ines once more by the hand, and Cassim followed, bearing a lighted torch. The drops that hung reeking from the walls, the cold rush of air, and the earthy smell, shewed these winding passages had long been pent up, and it was only by extreme caution that they could be passed in safety. At length they reached the bottom, where a door of iron stood covered with rust, and partly decayed, but secured by massive bars. These gave way to the strength of the Moors.

"The cavern lies before you," said Aza; "here we part."

Ines, whose feelings were too powerful for speech, could only embrace her deliverer, and thank her in half-formed sentences. "Go, daughter of a Christian people," said Aza, "mayst thou be happy! Think sometimes of the Moor; and may Allah, whose hand created both Moor and Christian—may He guide thee in peace. Fare thee well!"

Ines followed in silence her guides, as she waved her hand to Aza; nor did the noble-minded widow of Alcanzor quit the spot till the last faint echoes of their footsteps, that ran along the hollow way beneath the earth, assured her they had reached the extremity of the cavern.

Great was the surprise of Ines when, issuing from its mouth, she found a third Moor who there awaited them, holding two mules for herself and Cassim. She now learned from the latter, that by the active exertions of Aza (who intrusted only those Moors with her plan, upon whose fidelity she could depend), the mules had been brought out by the postern-gate of the castle, and led round to this spot, in the dusk of the evening. Ines instantly mounted, Cassim following her example, whilst her heart swelled with gratitude to her generous preserver. As she looked back, her eye caught a sight of the fortress that stood towering and dark on the summit of the precipice which she was about to descend, nor could she gaze on its walls without mingled sensations of terror and interest—terror, when she thought on the dangers that there had encompassed her; and interest, when she reflected that she had left within them Ferdinand, the eldest born of her beloved husband, still a captive, and Aza, her deliverer, exposed to all the horrors and mischances of war.

She sighed, as, descending the path, the towers were lost to her view; and looking in the direction she now pursued, an opening at the extremity of the pass afforded her a sight of the heights in the neighbourhood of Coimbra. The clouds, which hitherto obscured the moon, gradually broke and passed away, and a full flood of silver light displayed in all their majesty of outline the mountain tops, dazzling with lustre, yet white and cold as polished marble.

"They are near Coimbra," thought Ines, as she gazed upon them; "and at Coimbra are my children: there I shall once more see my children." A mother's feelings filled her heart as this thought crossed her mind; and she journeyed on with renewed strength, with a joy that long had been a stranger to her bosom.

CHAPTER XXV.

There I throw my gage,
Disclaiming here the kindred of a king,
And lay aside my high blood's royalty.

If guilty dread hath left thee so much strength,
As to take up mine honour's pawn, then stoop;
By that, and all the rights of knighthood else,
Will I make good against thee, arm to arm,
What I have spoke, or thou canst worse devise.

SHAKSPEARE.

It is not our purpose in these pages to detail the various events of a strife so unnatural as that between Alonso, king of Portugal, and his illegitimate but gallant brother Don Sanchez: suffice it to say, that although the latter again possessed himself of Codycera, near Albuquerque, the king having taken the field in person, the governor of that city, in the absence of Sanchez, surrendered it to Alonso, who burnt it to the ground, and by a step so fearful struck dismay into the hearts of the rebel powers.

Still Don Sanchez held out, though Alonso was bent on his ruin. In character, the sovereign of Portugal much resembled a monarch of a later period, Charles the Twelfth of Sweden, and, like him, thought a king should ever lead in person, as foremost to meet danger. The chivalric spirit of the times also inspired Alonso with a love of individual heroic deeds; so that he was as willing to decide a contest by single combat, whilst both armies were looking on, as he would have been to splinter a lance in the tournament. His actions, like his passions which inspired them, were sudden, violent, and often rash. We have now to relate an instance of this, productive of the most extraordinary effects.

The king, at the time we open this chapter, had retired into the castle of St. Iago, which we before noticed as standing within a short distance of the camp. His mother, the venerable Isabella, his queen, Beatrice of Castile, and his daughter, the Infanta Mary, were with him; whilst Don Pedro, who had not yet obtained intelligence of his son Ferdinand, was again engaged in strenuous efforts against the rebels. Hamet also, it is necessary to observe, had, on the previous

day, been consigned as a prisoner to Alonso by the master of the Wing. Intelligence on the sudden had been brought to the king that the Bastard of Portugal, supported by a numerous army, was on the march to surprise the camp which still whitened the plain.

Alonso, who, it was naturally expected, would have headed his men-at-arms on the instant, to come to that decisive battle he had so long and so ardently desired, instead of doing this, resolved on one of those acts of rash encounter for which he was famed; and neither the counsels of his mother, to whose powerful mind, unsubdued in its vigour by age, he had always shewn great respect, nor the advice of Azevedo, could shake his purpose. He sent his glove by a herald to challenge to single combat that brother whom he had driven into rebellion by unceasing hatred and oppression, with a proposal that the law of arms should finally decide the quarrel between them.

The spot named by the king for this hostile meeting was the vast plain that surrounded the camp; the hour, noon, on the following day. Whatever were the intentions of Alonso concerning Hamet, he was now too busied in arranging matters before the expected combat, to put his cruel intentions into execution, though he still persisted that, unless Prince Ferdinand were restored unharmed on the day after that of the combat, he would execute the dreadful threat denounced on Hamet by public proclamation.

At the time appointed for the meeting between himself and Don Sanchez, the cavalcade issuing from the castle of St. Iago was more like that attending some high festival for martial sports, than one which sallied forth to witness a combat so rash and desperate. Every thing spoke a brilliancy of rejoicing that could alone arise from the entire confidence which all men entertained in the certainty that success would attend their warlike champion the king. A long line of steel-clad archers issued from beneath the lofty gateway of St. Iago, followed by heralds and marshals, rich in their gorgeous apparel; and loud bursts of martial music made the old walls ring again in echoes to their clangour.

A chosen band of knights, mounted on steeds gaily caparisoned, next appeared as the body guard of the royal family. Their helmets, with lowered visors and waving plumes, shone resplendent, whilst each appeared with his massive shield (supported by a chain from the breast), and his lance, that had affixed to it a small square banner, indicative that he who bore it had risen to the honour of being a knight banneret. Next

appeared the sovereign, fully armed, mounted on his favourite war-horse, his figure drawn to its utmost height as he sat governing the animal with his accustomed ease, and waving his mailed hand to the crowd that saluted with deafening shouts the presence of their warlike king. His banner-bearer followed, attended by two esquires of the body, the one bearing a broad and massive shield, the other the royal and glittering lance.

Next came a crowd of young and agile knights (their arms new and brilliant), in whose appearance there was an evident attention to display the utmost magnificence of helmet, shield, and housings. The manner in which they rode was also gay and airy; now addressing each other with some lively remark, or looking around them, whilst curveting and managing their horses, so as at once to shew off the animals and the grace and skill of their riders to the best advantage. These knights were appointed to a high and distinguished duty; to which, in the gallant spirit of chivalry, they had emulously aspired—namely, that of guard of honour to the three royal dames, who, strange as it may appear, sallied forth to witness the combat of a son, a husband, and a father; for in these several relations did Alonso stand to these ladies.

His mother, the venerable Isabella, was mounted on a cream-coloured horse, the bridle held by a youthful knight who walked at the head of the animal. There was in her aged countenance much of the noble expression that distinguished her son's, yet none of its haughty or impassioned character. As the widow and mother of a king, her dress and appearance was stately. A circle of jewels bound her brows, and a large black veil hung over her shoulders like a mantle. But though magnificent, her attire had in it nothing gay or gaudy; it was composed of velvet, jet black in colour, and glittering in front with a brooch, girdle, and almonier thickly set with precious stones. Her hair, white as silver, her grave but benign aspect, inspired in every beholder, that reverence due to old age: a date of life, when it has been attained in the paths of wisdom and virtue, that claims honour's noblest crown; since the old in goodness and piety are marked by having stood the great trial of human life—years assailed by temptation, yet passed in virtue. The young may promise fairly and hope fairly, but the old are sanctified by practice; and none but the ignorant or the vicious can despise that time of life which God himself has marked with peculiar favour, since honoured age is often declared by his holy

prophets to be the temporal reward of the pious and the just. The wise will ever reverence age—the fool alone will despise it.

Beatrice, queen of Alonso, though she was nearly fifty years old, was still young in comparison with Isabella. She appeared like a noble tree that we still admire, though autumn has swept away almost every leaf of its beauty, and mellowed with sober tints those that yet hang but by a slight tenure, fading on its boughs. The queen likewise was mounted on a led palfrey; her looks spoke anxiety and concern, yet her demeanour was calm and majestic. The Infanta, Princess Mary, followed; and she alone, of all the females present, seemed to look as if the combat she was about to witness was neither unsuited to her feelings nor to her character; whilst her masculine person and countenance suggested the idea that a helmet and a lance would have become her quite as much, and even more than it did the youthful, gay, fluttering knight who led her palfrey by the rein; it was evident she submitted to be thus led merely as a matter of state, not of choice.

The aged Azevedo, and many elders amongst the nobles who attended the court and counsels of the king, followed, as well as the ladies whose office it was to wait upon the princesses. A vast company of knights bachelors closed the procession. As the king approached the spot appointed for the meeting, he saw a dense and glittering body of men-at-arms drawn up in line, in front of whose warlike appearance might be seen several knights, mounted on horseback, all armed. One of these, attended by two persons also mounted, advanced to meet the king; and as they stopped within some yards of what might be termed the arena chosen for the combat, they lowered their lances to salute him: a piece of courtesy common even between enemies about to engage in contest.

Alonso, followed by his principal knights, came forward to receive them, and as he returned, with haughty condescension, the salute, he said to the foremost, in his accustomed hasty tone and manner: "Thou art Don Sanchez of Portugal, as bastard in thy loyalty as in thy blood. Our glove was not returned, and we are here in person to maintain that challenge it gave to thy rebel arms. If thou hast in thee one spark of our common father, old king Denis's spirit, plant thy lance in rest, dally not with time or place, and so may St. Francis bless our arms as we will teach thee the duty due to

us, thy legitimate brother and thy king; or wilt thou lay down thy rebel lance, fall at our feet in the sight of thy traitorous host, and ask mercy for this unnatural rebellion?"

"I will ask no mercy of him," replied Don Sanchez, "who proclaimed me traitor, ere I had harboured one thought of treason; who seized the estates consigned to me by the late king, my father; branded me with infamy and proscription, and, having driven me to arms by hatred most unnatural—persecution most unjust—now gives me offers of mercy, if, craven like, I would acknowledge myself such as he would make me! This I will never do. No—rather would I die the death in this contest than yield to such base compromise. For one thing, king Alonso, even I, thy most misused brother will thank thee; it is, that thou hast given me a better chance, the single combat of sword and lance. Man to man, body to body, will I meet thee; the just cause against the tyrannous quarrel. I will not fear it; and if I fall, my blood will spare that of my faithful friends and followers."

"Rather say," replied the king, "of thy rascaille Moors. Shame on thee, Don Sanchez, who, as the offspring of a Christian king, though base in birth, could thus call in the aid of infidels to assist thy pretended rights, and bring a barbarous invasion on Algarva, where the tawny cut-throats spike the very women and children on their cimeters, whilst the red fires of our burning cities give light to their hellish acts of cruelty. This is thy doing."

"It is false, king," cried Don Sanchez; "I had no part in this invasion of the barbarous hosts that have overrun Algarva like a sweeping pestilence, which spares nor sex nor age. Those Moors, who were conquered by thy own arms, were invited by thy own promise of mercy to live at peace within thy dominions. These thou hast cruelly oppressed by vexatious acts and tyrannous imposts. These I promised should find redress by my interference, if my arm prevailed to bring thee to a sense of justice; with these I took part, and not with the barbarous invaders of Algarva, whom I would chastise as well as thou, did not my own wrongs demand such powers as I may lead into the field."

"But thou art answerable," said Alonso, "for the acts of thy allies. The Talba, the fierce Talba, has invited, nay, formed and set on foot, this very enterprise which has brought on the miserable kingdom of Algarva the woes of famine, fire, and slaughter. I tell thee, the barbarians have made war on the very earth; the fields of Algarva have they burnt

up like chaff; nor have they quenched the flames, but with the blood of the native Christians. Forests, cities, all have fallen before these invaders, that poured on the wretched country like the locusts of Egypt, sudden and innumerable, spreading destruction wherever they came. This is thy Talba's act, and thou shalt answer it, for he is thy ally!"

"Not in this," said Don Sanchez; "so help me holy saints of heaven, I knew not of his purpose! and in this is he a traitor to me as well as to Algarva."

"I will have no more words," exclaimed Alonso; "we are not here to war, like women, with the tongue, and the sharp encounter of angry taunts. Take thy ground, Don Sanchez, whilst the trumpets bray forth the charge that shall give thee to the chastisement of thy abused king and offended brother. If we fall—as we ourself gave the challenge—for that portion of king Denis's blood which flows in thy veins, we pardon thee our death; but if thou art vanquished, look to heaven for mercy, since none, save a short shrift with the priest, shalt thou find from Alonso."

"And none other would I ask, proud king," said Don Sanchez. "But vaunt not the issue ere the combat has commenced. To God and my just cause do I refer me, be it for life or death. Yet, Alonso, I would rather forgive thy past injuries than here contest them by way of arms, so that thou wouldst avow the wrongs thou hast heaped on thy father's son; for, if we meet, I must forget thou art my brother, and remember thee only as my worst, my most constant and deadly foe."

"Know me still as such," replied Alonso, whilst a haughty glance of defiance shot from his eyes upon his brother. "It will serve, like a whetstone, to sharpen thy steel. Here, I lower my visor. To thy post, Don Sanchez; esquires, knaves, why loiter ye? Give me buckler and lance, and look the men-at-arms form a wide circle around us. If I fall, hurt not the Bastard; our word is pledged for his safety; and though he be allied with Moors, yet is he no infidel who may be hanged like a dog, and no faith broken. Bid the trumpet speak, and see our orders be obeyed on the instant."

A wide extended circle was speedily formed, one half of which was composed of those nobles, knights, and men, who attended on the king; the other half consisted of the partisans of Don Sanchez. These several bands stood mute, with lowering angry looks on each other, like two black thunder-clouds that divide the heavens before a storm, and only unite

when it is about to burst. Even so did these now form, by their conjunction, the vast circus that was to be the witness of this strange and most unnatural combat; yet, unnatural as it was, by no means singular during the Middle Ages, when not only brother waged war against brother, but even sons against fathers, of which our own history affords some melancholy examples, especially during the reign of Henry the Second, as well as in that of an earlier period, William of Normandy with his guilty and unfortunate son Robert.

It was remarked that the queen mother Isabella, and the queen consort Beatrice, who had talked apart with Azevedo during the forming of the circle for the combat, now both appeared much agitated, and drew nearer to the field of action than the regular limits would admit. The marshals of the field most respectfully requested the royal dames to retire, as the trumpet had already blown the first blast; at the sound of which the two champions had taken their station face to face at the opposite extremities of the ring. On the second blast of the trumpet they poised their shields, and fixed the pointed lance in rest; at the third rude breath, nature's law was to be broken, and brother was to rush on brother.

They both prepared, with that high resolution in their demeanour which shewed their purpose to be as stern as it was fixed. Both were noble, both royal, and warriors far above the ordinary race of combatants. Their approaching contest might be compared to that of two eagles, to which men must necessarily look up, when they behold a combat waged between those whose elevation is so much above their own.

"Yet, at the instant when the last signal of the trumpet proclaimed the onset, Isabella—forgetful of her age, and with a vigour that could only have been inspired by an excitement like that of a fever, which has in it tenfold the strength of even youthful health—made her way through all impediments; and in a moment the gentle, yet spirited animal she rode, bore her up to the very centre of the circus. She checked its career, and the queen mother of Alonso remained fixed, with her right arm extended, and her imploring voice crying aloud, "Forbear!" as the two combatants, who had obeyed the signal, were rushing to the onset with pointed lances against each other, and who now, with extreme difficulty, whilst Isabella's life was in imminent danger, checked their steeds by bridle and curb ere they met in the encounter.

The suddenness of the act, the astonishing activity with

which the venerable Isabella had interposed, and her extreme danger (for none but thought she must have been spiked on the lance of her son or of his brother), so startled, so overpowered all who were present, that there was one thrilling and astounding cry of horror at the moment she rushed between them. She was safe; for Alonso, whose fiery steed obeyed him as a child would its master, in the midst of his hot career became fixed and quiet as a lamb. Don Sanchez, who rode a horse less used to the manage, could alone prevent the danger which threatened the queen from his lance, by suddenly turning the horse's head in another direction; it bore him nearly round the ring ere it would stop. He then gently paced up the animal to Isabella's side, anxious to learn she had received no injury.

A second shout of exultation for her safety rang through the air. It was followed by a breathless pause; for all now looked earnestly to the Queen, in anxious expectation of what would ensue; and though the multitude could not hear so much as the least accent of a voice so feeble as Isabella's, yet, from what they might see of her demeanour, they hoped they should be enabled to judge of the result. Beatrice, the queen consort, the Princess Mary, Azevedo, and a few others, privileged by blood or place, did not hesitate to come forward and take their station near Isabella.

At the moment they reached the spot, all were struck with the animation of mind that gave to the eye of age a lustre, an expression, which, bearing no affinity with that mortal part subject to the decay of time, alone results from the immortal spirit, and is therefore often found as impressive in age as in youth. The animated looks of Isabella, the tone of command rather than of entreaty in which she spoke, seemed to act like a spell on all around her; whilst the reverence due to her age and her high place, humbled even the proud impatient soul of Alonso, who stood mute, and listened respectfully to his mother as she thus schooled him. Don Sanchez also was near her.

"Shame on thee, Alonso," said Isabella: "art thou a ruler of others and cannot master thy own passion? Wilt thou not listen to the voice of reason and of conscience, that both condemn thee, whilst in the very act to encounter thy brother, whom thou hast so much wronged? And has thy mother no way left to teach thee what is due to thy honour, but that she, whom it is thy duty to guard with thy life against danger, must teach it thee at the peril of her own? Yet, could it

soften thy obdurate heart towards thy most abused brother, gladly would she have fallen on thy lance, and drop by drop have shed that blood from the very breast that gave thee life. Alonso, thou art my son; thou art not young; a king thou art—for thy father sleeps in the tomb,—yet know, that neither thy years, nor thy place, which gives the sceptre of power into thy hand, nor thy lance, though it be a terror to thy enemies, nor all on earth, can ever absolve thee from the duty due to the authors of thy being. One of them is dead; but thy mother lives, and in right of nature demands thy obedience; in her voice, too, hear that of thy father, when it commands thee to be reconciled to thy brother. Thou art mute: hast thou no answer? or wilt thou put so much shame on a mother's years, that bow her down to the earth, as to have no word for her, not so much of breath as would say, Mother, I mark thee?"

"Honoured queen, and my most dear mother," said Alonso, "I do mark thee. But what may I answer? Is not Don Sanchez an usurping bastard and a rebel?"

"There it is," replied the queen: "in that word hast thou spoken thy old spirit of jealousy. Shame on thy jealous doubts; they become not the brave; and I marvel to find them in him whose arms have gained him such a title—an usurping bastard! Those offensive words have been to thee, my son, like the voice of thy evil spirit, which all thy life long has whispered no other sounds to thy ear. It was such suspicions made thee become a rebel to thy father, and now would they make thee a murderer of thy brother. Look on Don Sanchez! Has he not a presence noble as thy own? Has he not a hand as bold as thine to meet the contest of an enemy? Yet these are but his outward parts. Turn thine eyes on the inward man, and there learn to know thy brother. My life for it, he is no traitor, if thou art natural in affection to him; he is no rebel, wouldst thou not usurp his due. He is not false, if thou art true. He is no bastard in soul, if thou art legitimate in nature's law, to love thy own flesh and blood; for one father gave ye both being. Don Sanchez has proved himself a brave man: extend to him thy heart and hand, and he is a loyal one. Off with thy gauntlet, Alonso—off with it, I say—thy mother commands thee to remove that glove of iron. Don Sanchez, a widowed queen entreats thee to do the same."

"I obey, madam," said Don Sanchez; and he removed the gauntlet from his hand as he spoke. Alonso took off his in

obedience to her command, but said not a word, and still seemed moody and thoughtful.

The venerable Isabella bent forward on her horse, snatched the gauntlet from Alonso's hand, and cast it on the ground: "Thus," she said, "thus fall, like this iron symbol of war, thy hard and cruel prejudice. Thou hast overcome many jealousies, my son, by my counsels: overcome this; and, trust me, in so mastering thy passion thou wilt leave this field a greater victor than if Don Sanchez had fallen beneath thy lance. Common men may be victors with the sword as well as thou; but let it be said, and by my lips, that my son, a sovereign Prince, was never yet subdued but by himself. That were a victory worthy a king! Look around you; yonder are your own followers, there stand your brother's; both born in Portugal, children of one soil, citizens and yeomen of thy own country; yet see how they stand listed for civil strife! So that, should these meet in combat, the very children who have drawn milk from their common mother would now drench their common land with kindred blood! Such must be the issue of this civil, this most unnatural war. Do you, their leaders, be as brothers, and they will embrace as such by your example. If ye will have wars, I will tell ye where to find them; and if ye cannot agree with yourselves to lead them on, old and feeble as I am, and but a woman, make me your leader: I will shame you both. Wherefore stand you here to brawl and quarrel, whilst I would guide you on to save the miserable Algarva; to crush the infidel Moors, the common enemies of Christendom, who would anew drench your native land with slaughter? Alonso, give thy brother thy hand in amity and pardon; and do you, Don Sanchez, receive it with duty and loyalty; for, remember, your brother is your king!"

Alonso dismounted, Don Sanchez did the same; and the king, extending his hand to his brother, said, in reply to Isabella, "Madam, you are the victor of this field. Surely, the spirit of king Denis speaks in his widow's counsels: so true are those words, that, whilst Infidels overrun and destroy our miserable province of Algarva, it becomes not Christian princes to war against each other. Don Sanchez, I pardon thy rebellion. Be to me as a loyal subject, join thy arms with mine to drive these invaders from Algarva, and thy wrongs shall be redressed. Henceforth know Alonso as thy brother."

"And as my king," said Don Sanchez, falling on his knees

before him, as he respectfully kissed his extended hand. "Believe me, sire, had not you forgotten that you were a brother, I had never ceased but to remember you were my prince."

"I believe it," replied Alonso. "In this field we triumph over all our ancient quarrels; and peace, the desired end of all wars, be between us. Rise, Don Sanchez. My mother would speak; and she has words that, by the rood! strike our lances from our hands more readily than did ever arm of brass or iron—Speak, noble Isabella! a victor's crown should be thine; for thou hast this day gained a great victory; and after-ages, as they listen to the tale, will applaud the wisdom and the virtue of Portugal's greatest queen."

"Far more shall they applaud a king," said Isabella, "who has done an act so royal—to overcome himself. I am old, and cannot hope to see the end of these things; yet do I predict that a bond of hatred generously cancelled, and the seal of love impressed on nature's renewed charter of brotherly affection, cannot but cherish all that is noble and happy between you. I have nothing to give but a mother's blessing. Alonso, I bestow it on thee: and though old in years, and nearly useless in acts, yet holy men have said, 'Despise not a parent's blessing,' for it shall, like seed cast in the good earth, bring forth increase when it is bestowed on the duteous child. Bless thee, Alonso. And for thee, Don Sanchez, though I have pleaded thy cause, and, thanks to our blessed Lady! with good effect, yet I would counsel thee to remember that thy wrongs could scarce sanction thy late acts to him who was thy king. Do thou blot out the memory of them by zeal and love; and peace, happiness, be with thee."

Don Sanchez respectfully acknowledged the gratitude he felt for the generous part Isabella had taken in his favour; and assured her she should have no cause to repent it, as he trusted that, in recovering his king's favour, he had found a brother.

"And now," continued Isabella, "let me ask a boon of the king, as a further assurance that all shall be forgotten."

"Speak your pleasure, my royal mother," said Alonso; "I partly guess your purpose—you would plead for those who have joined the banner of Don Sanchez in opposition to my own. I will grant your boon whatever it may be, so that it ask no mercy for the Moors, nor for any Christian who may have been the cause to deliver up our grandchild, the young Prince Ferdinand, into their hands."

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war on the universally hated invaders of Algarva, as they had before done on quarreling with each other.

Yet, for the time being, one expectation was more engrossing even than the prospect of driving out the Moors; it was the festivites that the generous Isabella had appointed to cement love and good fellowship between them. In a few hours nothing was to be seen on the vast plain but busy preparations for feasting and rejoicing. Oxen and sheep were slaughtered without mercy, and the royal purveyors were ordered to let there be no lack of good wine to accompany good food, yet not so much as to produce drunkenness and its companion brawling.

The minstrels, jugglers, dancing girls, boys, and mountebanks of the time, who constantly hovered near the camp, felt this was a day peculiar to the exercise of their vocation; and soon nothing was heard but the jingling of lutes, rebecs, gitterns, and pipes, and a vast crowd soon gathered round a band of strolling jongleurs, who now represented, as they thought to the life, the religious play of the daughter of Herodias dancing before Herod to win the head of John the Baptist. The young man who personated the child of the fair Herodias was famed for his dancing, and admirable as a tumbler. The way he represented melting the heart of the Hebrew king, was by dancing on his head before him. An example of this favourite mode, in the Middle Ages, of so representing this circumstance in Jewish history, our curious readers, if they are travellers, may still see, carved in alto relievo, above the western entrance of Rouen cathedral in France.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The king is full of grace, and fair regard.
SHAKSPEARE.

Ere we say anything respecting the banquet given by Isabella to the King and Don Sanchez, with the extraordinary events that followed, it will here be necessary to pause a moment, in order to turn our attention to Don Diego and Alvaro Gonsalez, the consternation of whose minds, on learning Aza Anzurez had liberated Ines de Castro, may be readily conceived. It was in vain they murmured; for Aza, with an acuteness of observation in which she was by no means deficient, had remarked their anxiety to conceal from Prince Ferdinand that they were the individuals who brought him a prisoner to the fortress. On the first burst of their anger, therefore, Aza hinted it was in her power, if she chose to avail herself of it, to acquaint the prince with the names of those who had so captured him: a hint that effectually silenced whatever resentment they might in secret entertain for the widow of Alcanzor.

In one thing, however, they succeeded by dint of art and cunning: they wormed the secret out of the simple Moor who had conducted the mules to the mouth of the subterranean passage, so that he acknowledged he believed the lady had taken the road to Coimbra. No sooner had Gonsalez learned this, than he deeply pondered on what would be the probable result of Inez de Castro's meeting with Don Pedro. He instantly held a long conference with Diego, over whose ill-principled and weak mind he had great influence. The determination then adopted by these companions in iniquity will, in due time and place, be stated; at present we shall only add, that both these friends availed themselves of the opportunity afforded by the Master of the Wing breaking up his camp in the plain, to obey the summons of the king, and left the fortress on the day after the flight of the Lady Ines.

It may appear singular, that men who had so actively intrigued to support a faction, which threatened the very

existence of the present government, should use so much caution in what they did, or should so long delay to take an open part against Alonso. In fact, though amongst the most artful of his secret enemies, neither of them had yet taken up arms as rebels. The whole mystery may be solved in a few words. Gonsalez and Diego were at heart equally selfish; the former cold-blooded and cunning, the latter more apt to be hurried on by passion to acts less cautious than his companion. Gonsalez was exactly that kind of reformer who will take care to see he is playing a winning game before he would throw the last great stake upon the chances. His secret wishes favoured the rebellion, his secret acts had done so too; but he must see that rebellion assume a face of success ere he draw a sword to commit himself irrevocably.

If his enemies spoke truth (who, long after these events occurred, pretended to define the motives of so profound an intriguer), they averred that it had throughout been the design of Gonsalez, should his conduct become suspected by the king, to declare that he had joined the faction only with a view to possess himself of its secrets the better to frustrate them. It will no longer, therefore, be matter of surprise, that whilst he was anxious to gain possession of the person of Prince Ferdinand to assist the plans of the rebels, he was no less anxious to conceal that such an act was brought about by his own immediate instrumentality.

It is a difficult and even a disgusting task to trace the complicated, the endless windings and turnings of a political intriguer in dark factions and fierce treasons. An honest man has a straight road before him, and his steps are traced without an effort; but the wily villain, who now seeks an ambush, now a devious track, and again can nowhere be traced, requires not only minute observation, but even conjecture, to find out to what point he leads.

Thus much concerning Gonsalez and Diego, more especially of the former, have we found it necessary to state; else would the sequel of their conduct appear not merely contradictory, but even improbable, if anything can seem improbable, in the conduct of men who, having no principles of action but selfishness and ambition, scrupled not to adopt any means that might promote their own designs. After leaving the fortress, it was likely enough they purposed joining Don Sanchez, since they had quitted Don John of Almeria in a friendly manner; but soon did the report of the extraordinary reconciliation between Alonso and his brother meet their ear.

To a politician like Gonsalez, there needed no more to tell him how the affair would end; as he well knew that the keystone to the hopes of the faction was the disunion of the king with a nobleman so powerful and so beloved as his brother. These once more united in bonds of amity, Alonso in the end must be invincible. Diego was easily brought to view the matter in the same light. Gonsalez, therefore, came to an instant conclusion what part now to act. He had heard that all who shewed themselves zealous against the Moors in Algarva were secure not merely of pardon but of favour. The king, he had no cause to fancy, as yet even suspected him. Gonsalez in a moment, therefore, changed from a factious dealer in secret intrigue and rebellion, to a most loyal and devoted subject of Alonso the Brave. Let not this startle our readers. The history of the Middle Ages, and of that country where the scenes we record occurred, furnish many examples of changes nothing less wonderful; and even in more modern times we have seen instances of the veering round of politicians quite as startling.

We repeat it, no weathercock ever blew round more directly from north to south, than did the rebellious spirit of Gonsalez shift to the point of loyalty on finding that the winning gale set, for a certainty, in that quarter. Yet, notwithstanding all his effrontery, conscious villany made him somewhat doubtful how to approach the king; for he determined to lose no time in being one of the first at court to congratulate Alonso on the reconciliation with his brother. A deep plan of iniquity now first suggested itself to his dark mind, to obtain the entire confidence and favour of the king. The plan was already conceived; and when did Gonsalez want activity to work out the intricate conceptions of his own policy? For the present, however, other matters demand our attention.

Gonsalez arrived with his companion Diego at the castle of St. Iago at night, whilst the flowing bowl, loud minstrelsy, and every demonstration of joy, mingled in the illumined hall, at the banquet of Isabella. The venerable queen sat in state on the raised daïs at the upper end of the hall, surrounded by all the royal family (save Don Pedro, who could not yet have learnt the joyful tidings of his father and uncle's reconciliation), and the chief nobles of the court.

In order that no anxious motive might seem to occasion this sudden return, Gonsalez and Diego mingled with the crowd of knights and courtiers in the ordinary manner; and on paying their respects to the king, with the accustomed forms,

when questioned by Alonso as to the motive of their late absence whilst his affairs had been in so perilous a crisis, Gonsalez readily replied, that was a question should be answered to his grace's ear in private.

The significant look with which this was spoken assured Alonso that he had something to communicate of import, and the king vouchsafed to promise a private audience on the following morning.

From the unrestrained manner of Alonso, Gonsalez and his friend felt assured they had nothing to apprehend. It was evident, that he suspected neither of having played false to him. The great point, therefore, now remaining to be accomplished was, to gain such an interest with the sovereign as to set all after discoveries at defiance; and to make even Alonso himself a party concerned in what was meditated. Well did Gonsalez know the passions of the king were as fuel, ready, on the slightest spark, to light up a conflagration truly fearful.

On this night, the part Gonsalez had to play was one that should create no suspicion that he harboured a thought but such as all the world might read. With how hardened a brow, and how false a heart, did he join the joyous multitude; laughed, quaffed the wine-cup, and seemed bent on harmless mirth as much as any one present who had no object beyond the hour of social enjoyment. Diego was less gay; and in him it appeared equally natural, since the appeal he had made respecting the Lady Ines was supposed to afford him sufficient cause to be grave and even thoughtful. Little did they who so judged of his thoughtfulness suspect what deep resentment, and almost hatred, rankled in his heart towards the object of his once warm affections: a heart equally impatient to satisfy the fierce dictates of lawless designs or insatiable revenge—passions that now allowed him not a moment's peace.

The diversions of the evening were such as constantly attended the banquets of the age, the manners of which we have occasionally attempted to portray. A mystery, as it was called, was performed; being a sort of drama, the subject usually taken from the Bible. This was followed by a large company of persons, who came in various dresses and as various characters, having little else to do but to make up the procession. These, after a while, either danced, bore torches, or played on musical instruments, whilst others merely paraded the hall. Amongst them, for all were muffled with their 'disguisings,' was one who wore a long dark robe and close hood, and who took no more active a part than that of a follower in the company.

Towards the close of the entertainment he had managed to station himself near the king; and as it often happened that, at such banquets, some one was introduced to surprise his grace with a speech, or with some witty and moral sayings (a task often consigned to the court-fool), Alonso, fancying such might be the purpose of the hooded masker who stood near him, did not deem there was anything more than ordinary in the evident pains he took to gain a closer access to the royal person.

The king saw this figure pressing forward at the very moment when, after having pledged the health of Don Pedro (which was drunk with enthusiasm throughout the hall), he again extended the golden cup, and said aloud, "We would quaff this to the health of Prince Ferdinand; but, alas! who shall say if we may even yet pledge him in the certainty that he lives?—we have no tidings of the dear boy. Yet, pledge me, friends. With one voice, with one heart, let us bind ourselves in the bond of fellowship, to spare nor toil, nor blood, to recover one who may hereafter wear the crown that now rests on our own head. And, above all, let us swear to requite his enemies, those vile Moors, who have dared to hold in bonds your prince, the son of our beloved son. Pledge us, nobles and friends—To the health of Ferdinand!"

At the word, every one in the hall arose; and with voices like a deep chorus did they repeat the pledge to the health of Ferdinand, to deliver him from captivity, and to avenge themselves on the Moors. Gonsalez and Diego were observed to take a full cup in answer to the king's command.

"We have no tidings," said Alonso, "of Ferdinand. This is the last day of grace to Hamet. If to-morrow's sun arise, and the boy is not restored, Hamet dies by lingering tortures, such as shall prove how terrible it is to fall within the wrath of kings."

Alonso was about to continue, when his eye caught the muffled figure who stood near him, and who now advanced, bearing in his hand a chaplet and a scroll; a mode of paying homage at a banquet, in which it was common to introduce a set of complimentary verses to royal personages, or sometimes to prefer a petition.

"What wouldst thou?" said Alonso: "thy time is ill judged; we want not homage now. Or art thou come to prefer some begging prayer of distress; that what thou wouldst gain may not be denied thee over the wine-cup, when the heart is full and the hand open?"

The figure, without for a moment removing hood or mantle, knelt before the king, first presented him with a chaplet of laurel, and then with the written scroll. It was brief; for the king read the contents in a minute. As he did so, his countenance became fixed and thoughtful, and he looked with an inquisitive eye on the petitioner, whose homage was paid in mute gestures, for not a word passed his lips.

"This is strange," said Alonso; "but yet——" he bent his head and spoke some words to the kneeling suppliant, who immediately on hearing them arose, and bowing with deep reverence to the king, retired from the general gaze, and was soon lost amidst the crowd. The king then beckoned to his chamberlain, to whom he spoke a few words apart. The chamberlain listened, bowed as if in obedience to some command given him by his royal master, and withdrew from the presence.

It may readily be supposed that this dumb show excited much curiosity amongst the ladies of the court. For the nobles, they were less curious, as they well knew it was by no means uncommon for begging poets, and other personages admitted to exhibit their skill before the king, at such moments to prefer some ingenious petition to draw upon the royal bounty.

The queen-mother was the first who spoke. "Who is this suppliant, my son? You have received his address with much attention, whatever it may be. If distress would ask relief, it becomes Isabella, on a day when she would rejoice all hearts, to yield relief to the unhappy. Can she do aught for this man that is worthy the charity of a queen? Who is this petitioner?"

"It matters not," replied the king, in a careless manner. "He is none whom our mother need relieve. To ourself comes his petition. And now, nobles and friends," continued Alonso, addressing the assembly, "ere we retire, we would crave your attendance on the morrow, at noon, within the hall of council; there to deliberate on such measures as we must forthwith take for the deliverance of Algarva. We would require, by letters, that our son, Don Pedro, should bring up his forces to rout the Talba, that fierce Moor, who has hitherto defied all our attempts to capture or subdue him. He is the very life of this Moorish revolt: the Talba ours, we have nothing to fear in Portugal; and for Algarva, it may not resist our combined Christian arms. To-morrow in the hall we will debate of these things. Till then farewell. Fill the cup of

repose; we will retire for the night. Yet let not our absence break up this company; we would not set midnight as a boundary to joy and wine. We are wearied, and the duties of the morrow ask rest, to make us the fitter in our condition to meet them. We pledge this cup in health to all. To all good night; and may joyous draughts bring dreams as glad to the reveller's pillow! Fare ye well."

The king saluted with respect his mother and the royal dames, then bowed, and retired from the company. It was his common practice to retire early from a banquet, as indulgence in any kind of luxury was a thing unknown to Alonso; even whilst he gave frequent pledges to promote the joy of the assembly, he tasted but sparingly the cup that he held to his lips.

As he passed through the gallery leading to his own apartment, he stopped, and said to the chamberlain who was conducting him, "Didst thou mark the man?"

"Truly, sire, I did," replied the chamberlain, who instantly understood of whom the king spoke.

"Go seek him out," said Alonso: "he was wrapped in a long black gown and mantle. He is waiting near the eastern entrance to the great hall. Bring him hither without delay. But look you tell no man: life or death to one dear to us may depend on this hour. Tarry not, but obey."

The king entered his apartment alone, as the trusted chamberlain departed to fulfil his commands. Alonso closed the door of his chamber, drew forth the scroll he had thrust into his bosom, and again read with attention the few words it contained. "Who can he be?" muttered the king. "It is strange. There is some mystery in these words: 'Alonso, give me a secret audience this night, and the desire of thy heart shall be fulfilled.' I will give thee audience, whoever thou art," continued the king, as he cast the scroll on the table; "but let me have my dagger at hand. Alonso fears no man, yet it is well to be prepared; for treason often walks in a muffled hood."

He examined his dagger, and brought forward the girdle, in which it was placed, so as to have this instrument of defence ready for instant use. Alonso then threw himself into a seat, awaiting the return of the chamberlain with the stranger, whom he had commanded should be conducted into the royal presence. Ere we follow the steps of this person, we must once more return to the banqueting-hall on a night so memorable.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Cowards in ill, like cowards in the field,
Are sure to be defeated. To strike home
In both is prudence: guilt begun must fly
To guilt consummate, to be safe.

THE BROTHERS.

After the king had retired, the assembly, deeming the age of Isabella, the mistress of the banquet, unfit for protracted reveling, prepared to disperse, for the hour of midnight had arrived. Guest by guest therefore speedily made obeisance to the queen, and departed. The knights, who were stationed in the camp on the plain, set off to gain their quarters, under the influence of gay spirits, heightened, but not disturbed, by wine; and as they pricked their way along the road that led from the castle, they laughed, talked, made remarks on the strange events of the day, and those that would probably follow them; or hummed snatches of those tunes that still ran in their heads as favourites, having so lately heard them played and sung by the minstrels in the hall. Such nobles as rested within the walls, after having seen the royal dames depart, also retired for the night.

Don Gonsalez and Diego, whose sudden arrival at a castle so crowded to excess as that of St. Iago occasioned difficulty in finding them quarters, were to sleep in a chamber of an old tower, from which two pages were to be turned out in order to make room for their superiors. Whilst they now awaited some necessary preparations, Diego and Gonsalez remained the sole occupants of the late gay and now deserted hall.

Nothing perhaps is more striking, or which, to a moralising mind that would find "good in every thing," presents a more just picture of the changes from gay to sad, so often seen in the world, than the appearance of a banqueting-hall during and immediately after a festival. Those splendid objects, which look gay and magnificent whilst lighted by tapers and torches (seen as they are amidst glittering dresses and joyous faces, smiling and busy in the toil of pleasure), when left in

the disorder occasioned by their recent use, present a slovenly, melancholy, and even mean appearance.

So was it now: the torches had been extinguished; there was no light but such as came from some half-expired tapers. The change was as complete as if the wand of an enchanter had passed over it, and the late fairy visions of gladness were dissolved. The feeble light that remained served but to shew the darkness and gloom of the vast apartment, whose roof (not unlike that of our Westminster Hall) of carved oak, was now seen dingy in hue, a mass of shadows and blackness, except where a prominent, carved, and grinning head looked down, like a fiend rejoicing over the two worthies, so devoted to the worship of evil as were Diego and Gonsalez.

These, for some time, remained seated near the upper end of the hall. The latter arose, and paced it with slow steps; and whilst awaiting the summons to their sleeping-chamber, they continued to talk of matters "deep and dangerous;" yet in a tone low and hollow, like men who feared lest they should be startled by the very echoes of their own voice.

"How gay thou wert to-night, Gonsalez!" said Diego. "Who, to have seen thee, would have thought that such designs as those hinted to me by you this morning, could have been harboured in a brain so light of mood?"

"Oh, content you," answered Gonsalez: "I know what I do, well. It is your still waters that make men fear and fathom their depths; your babbling brook, that talks on as the sunbeam shines upon it, is a thing which no man fears: even so are the gay in spirit never suspected."

"Thou hast caught some of the minstrel's art," said Diego, "who has this night twanged his wire and catgut till my head aches with it. Thou art grown poetical, Gonsalez: a strange adoption of language in the mouth of a far-sighted politician like thyself."

"I follow a court, or mean to follow one, Diego," replied Gonsalez; "and at court, you know, there are divers fashions of words as well as suits."

"The king," said Diego: "I doubt the king. If he should know what has chanced, he may——"

"Doubt is the mother of fools," answered Gonsalez; "and her offspring are ever idiot born and bred. Who comes hither? our ancient friend and ally, Arias Coello."

"He comes in a good hour," said Gonsalez. "How now, Arias?"

Arias Coello slowly and cautiously advanced, with signs and

gestures, such as would have made others, less acquainted with his character, fancy he had lost his wits. He turned up his eyes and hands, shook his head, and shewed by his countenance that he had, or affected to have, some strange cause for such expressions of alarm.

"What ails thee, Arias?" continued Diego. "Hast thou no tongue? art thou turned mummer? or thinkest thou that we can interpret these dumb signs of wonder as the monks do the movements of their wooden saints, which they call miraculous!"

"As you value life, jest not," said Coello. "I have that for your ears will strike terror into your hearts; ye know not the danger in which ye both stand."

"Speak it then," said Diego; "or," he continued, looking around, "do you fear to utter it in this vast place? Why, else, tell of danger, yet delay to point out in what shape it comes?"

"No; I fear nothing here," said Coello: "all have deserted the hall save ourselves; and whilst we are here, no one will suspect we debate on secret matters. Here you might speak of murder without danger."

"Of murder!" said Gonsalez, as he dwelt upon the word, whilst a bitter smile passed over his dark lip: "the word is ominous; and, may be, Coello, it is germane to the matter in my thought. What is thy intelligence? Speak, man, and briefly."

"Speak!" cried Coello. "Ay, marry, and freely will I do so; would you could hear me as gladly. You know not what awaits you. I learnt from your own esquire, who was wounded when you pursued and attacked the Lady Ines de Castro's attendants in her flight, that you had captured Prince Ferdinand as well as that woman."

"What of that?" said Gonsalez; "and how came my runaway esquire of the body to make thee his confident in my matters."

"Alack!" said Arias, "he was dangerously wounded in the affray. He fled, and sought my house, knowing me thy friend. He died beneath my roof of his hurts, and told me all ere the spirit parted from the body."

"Good," said Gonsalez; "one dangerous witness of that affair is gone. He tells no tales whose silence is secured by the grave: and for thee——"

"I would never have sanctioned thy act to detain and imprison the prince, if——"

"If!" exclaimed Gonsalez, "give me not—if. Thou who

didst join our former acts will not betray us now we are become true to the king? Thou durst not; for think not thy tongue should ever utter word more didst thou do this."

"Thou art hot and testy as the king," said Coello. "I betray you! I dream not of such a purpose. I have come hither to warn you of danger."

"And in good time, then," said Gonsalez; "for I have not yet spoken apart with the king. To-morrow he gives me audience; it may be well to know this ere I seek him."

"You have heard," continued Coello, "that when the king promised pardon to all who had followed his brother's banner in the late rebellion, he made a special exception that such mercy should in nowise extend to any who had taken part in the detention of Prince Ferdinand."

"And is this thy mighty news?" said Gonsalez with a sneer; "think ye I was so dull of foresight that I could not guess the matter of that page even before the book was opened? I never thought the haughty Alonso would pardon man, woman, or child, who had taken part in imprisoning the very mule on which his runaway grandson rode. I am prepared to meet that evil on all points; ay, and more than that, to turn this seeming danger to profitable account."

"Impossible," said Coello: "think how many are privy to the secret, and the young prince himself——"

"Knows not we were his captors," said Gonsalez. "Hear me, I will be more brief than thou art. Don John of Almeria and the Prior of Evora, for their own sakes will not betray the secret. And as to the mother of Hamet, her son's life was once preserved by this very prince being held as hostage for him. So I fear not her. Another person, and to my belief but one other, is aware of the secret; for my own followers knew not that the boy we seized was of royal blood. That other is a woman, whose tongue will burn to betray us all, and she must be silenced."

"It is Ines de Castro of whom you speak," said Diego: "how silenced?"

"There are ways and means to silence the tongue of woman," said Gonsalez, "when it is active to do mischief; and this woman is as a viper in the king's path. He will thank that friendly hand which shall stretch itself forth to crush it. The king hates her with deadly malice; for she has been the bar to all his plans respecting Arragon, when he, by marriage, would have assured to his son, Don Pedro, a second crown. Now, friends, join with me. Remove this obstacle from the king's

path, and we will so buffet the restless billows of these stormy times, that our bark shall be the first to reach the harbour."

"What mean you?" inquired Diego, who fixed his eyes on Gonsalez with an intense gaze, as if he would read the inmost recesses of his thoughts. In the dark countenance of his friend, seen by the gloomy light of a few tapers, marked as it was with strong shadows that made every harsh line apparent, there was a ruthless expression, which told of something terrible within his mind. Diego shuddered as, with a face full of doubt and a quivering lip, he again asked Gonsalez to explain his purpose in more direct words. Coello's callous heart did not feel aught but a desire to know by what means Gonsalez intended to bring about the security of their own persons and fortunes, and even to improve the latter. There was nothing, therefore, to be read in his sullen features, but an eager curiosity, which shewed itself in the half-opened mouth, and the eye that wandered restless, first on Gonsalez, then on Diego, who seemed to understand each other tolerably well in thought and look, as well as by speech.

Gonsalez bent his head forward as he said, "Diego, thou didst tell me that Ines de Castro acknowledged herself to thee the wedded wife of Don Pedro, and that she was a mother."

"Holy saints!" exclaimed Coello, "what a discovery! The king never dreamed his son would so disgrace his royal blood and lineage. Why, did aught happen to Prince Ferdinand, the offspring of this woman would stand as next heirs to the crown."

"Ay," said Gonsalez, his lips curling with diabolical malice as he spoke, "on that circumstance do I rest my plans as on a rock. Alonso would strangle such offspring in the cradle with his own hand, rather than see it the inheritor of his crown. Such is his temper, or I know him not."

"I take it—I take it," cried Coello. "I read the plan. It cannot fail. What good angel inspired the thought?"

"Rather say, what fiend?" said Diego, who raised his head and shewed a countenance white as death, yet marked with the evidence of strong and vindictive passions. "Had she been other—had she not been false, cruel to me, this hour had never chanced. Even now I have hardly resolution to go on with you, Gonsalez."

"You know his purpose then?" said Coello.

"In part I do," answered Diego; "and I guess what must follow."

"Art thou faint hearted, Diego?" said Gonsalez. "And

must I give thy waning courage strength by repeating to thee, item by item, the list of thy own wrongs, as would an usurer tell out each particular of his account, when he seeks interest on the payment of a long, long debt? or wilt thou be soft hearted, generous, pitiful? kiss the foot of her who spurned, scorned, reviled, and cast thee off! broke a sacred bond to thee, as she would snap the latchet of her shoe; and, whilst laughing at the credulity and the patient spirit of her first suitor, gave herself to the arms of Don Pedro, ere thou hadst well recovered the consequences of the buffet he in so princely a manner bestowed on thee—on thee, Diego, the fond and fooled rival!"

"Peace," said Diego sternly, as a convulsed movement of the muscles of his face and throat spoke his extreme agitation: "Peace, Gonsalez. Be not like the night owl, to hoot in my ears what is as loathsome to me as the omen of that bird to the dying." Diego paused a moment, struck his hand violently on the haft of his dagger, and, with eyes that glowed like balls of fire, said in a deep unearthly voice, "Thou hast steeled my heart with thy taunts. Speak on; I will be as ruthless as thyself. I will have her blood in requital of my wrongs."

"It shall be poured forth as a sacrifice on the altar thou hast reared to the God of vengeance," said Gonsalez. "Now, Coello, mark my plan. To-morrow I seek the king. Diego goes with me, and possibly we may require thy aid. Our late absence we account for by telling Alonso, that, in the effort to recover Prince Ferdinand, who, seduced by the arts of the Lady Ines, had become companion of her flight, we traced their steps to the Fortress of Death, where, having obtained admission, Diego learned that Ines was the wedded wife of Don Pedro, and, as she herself acknowledged, the mother of children. Little doubt, therefore, can be entertained, but that, in order to secure to her own offspring the succession to the crown, she had given up Prince Ferdinand to the Moors. That suspicion is her death warrant with Alonso, or the king is no longer himself; for well do I know of old to what his sudden passions lead."

"To what?" said Coello; who, hardened as he was, seemed even startled at the plan of the savage-hearted Gonsalez.

"To death," cried Gonsalez, in a deep, low voice. "Remember the fate of Gerard, the late bishop of Evora."

"I do," replied Coello. "For a smaller matter than this, Alonso dipped his hands in the old man's blood. The bishop

did but tell the prince that, if he continued his rebellious acts towards his father, king Denis, he would denounce against him the thunders of the church; and for that saying Alonso caused the prelate to be murdered. Holy saints! it was a wicked act thus to cut off a reverend man."

"And think you," continued Gonsalez, "that a man whose passions have increased with his years, have gained strength as he gained power to give them sway—think you, I say, such a man will hestitate to take the life of her whose existence may endanger that of Ferdinand, the favoured grandchild, the fond hope of the succession?"

"It is true," cried Diego; "the king's passions are deadly, and sudden as they are unsparing; yet I would that my own wrongs were less great, to spare me the part I must take in her death. I would that I could love her still with pity, or that my hate were hardened as thine, Gonsalez."

"You need but another trial of her scorn to make it so," said Gonsalez; "or another blow from the hand of her princely husband, whilst she looks exultingly on, and bids thee turn the other cheek to meet a second."

"Enough," said Diego: "no more of that; it is written in my brain in characters of fire."

"Wilt thou then Gonsalez," said Coello, "move the king to make thee the instrument of his justice on this guilty woman?"

"I will so manage his passion as to make him command the deed," replied Gonsalez. "That will be a master-piece of my art; for I hold I have some skill in directing the passions of the headstrong. And it will make Alonso himself a party so deeply concerned in the act, that, happen what will hereafter, he will not dare but support us."

"Us, us?" said Coello: "I said not I would join you."

"O! pardon me, sir," replied Gonsalez: "the price of my confidence, and of thy future fortunes, must be no less. I trust not even thee, Arias, worthy and true as thou art, with such a plan, without adding the favour of making thee a sharer both in its execution and in the benefits it will purchase. Don Diego does not shrink, though he had once tender thoughts for this woman; and why shouldst thou?"

"Well, well, I will think of it," said Coello:

"But Prince Ferdinand; what wilt thou do about restoring him to the king, yet so that no suspicion of what has passed may fall on thyself?"

"There is some difficulty in that point, I grant you," replied

Gonsalez; "yet wit, with good management, may master it. On no account must Prince Ferdinand be restored till this business is despatched; since, on the suspicion that Ines de Castro would rid herself of him to the Moors, to make her own children heirs to the crown, do we rest our hopes of the king's speedy execution of our purpose. He hates her deadly. He will be glad of such a pretext, as an excuse to his own conscience, to be rid of her; for then will he build anew on his son Don Pedro's marriage with the Infanta of Arragon. I will start that thought, if it escape his memory at the moment."

"Good," said Coello: "but Ferdinand?"

"When the deed is done," answered Gonsalez, "I have a farther plan to restore him to the king, as if I were his deliverer from the Moors. Of that hereafter."

"Thou art a consummate intriguer," said Coello. "How well thou hast fathomed this matter in all its shoals, and depths, and quicksands, so as to avoid wreck on either. I cannot choose, Gonsalez, but honour thy profound skill."

"I have read the minds of men," answered Gonsalez, "to turn them to my own purposes; and never yet did my skill fail me." He said this with a haughty air; for his pride of talent, however wickedly employed, sometimes betrayed him into an unguarded expression of self-gratulation on his own powers. "What we meditate," he continued, "is an act of deliverance to all Portugal, especially to the ancient nobility of the realm, who have so much reason to curse the usurping influence of all Castilians."

"Thou wilt become the idol of the people for this deliverance," said Coello; "for they curse the Castilian favourites even more than do the nobility."

"And Diego, too," said Gonsalez: "he will share the worship due to a deliverer. Diego, think of that."

"I think of nothing," replied Diego, "but her scorn, and the agony of soul that Don Pedro will endure when he shall learn what has chanced."

"All depends," said Gonsalez, "on two things—despatch in what is done, and that Ines de Castro dies at Coimbra before Prince Ferdinand can be restored to the King. Nay, the more I think of it, the more do I feel it will be an act of public good to Portugal. Who shall dare to call it murder?"

"Murder!" The word seemed to be distinctly echoed in a clear solemn voice, that arose as from the lower end of the hall. Terror seized the conscience-struck villains. Diego fixed his eye in horror on the extremity of the apartment that

lay in shadow, as if he expected some evil spirit, who had echoed their fell purpose, would start into visible perception. Coello shook from head to foot, and could only exclaim, "Holy saints and angels, look upon us!"

Gonsalez, who was too hardened to fear man or spirit, though startled at the moment, was sufficiently master of himself to determine on seeking out the cause. With looks wild and terrific, he drew his dagger with one hand, snatched up in the other a taper that stood on the table, and rushed so swiftly towards the end of the hall, that the strong current of air extinguished the light he bore ere he reached the spot he had resolved to search. Instantly he returned for another taper, resolving to advance with more care; but whilst he was in the very act of raising it from the table, whether it were real, or whether it were only deception, created by terror and the excitement of an alarmed imagination, it seemed to Coello that he saw a shadowy form steal from behind one of the bulky columns at the end of the hall, and gliding swift and noiselessly through the shade, disappear through a small private doorway.

"Look! look!" stammered forth Coello, as he extended his hand and pointed to the spot; "I—I—I see it! there it goes! it passes through the portal!"

A door was heard to close, though with but a slight sound. A cold shudder stole over even the stubborn heart and iron frame of Gonsalez; it seemed to turn his blood to ice, as he heard a sound that brought with it the idea of detection. In another moment he recovered himself, and accompanied by Diego, they both lost not an instant in making their way to the obscure part of the hall whence the alarm had arisen. Their first examination was directed to the door. It did not move, but seemed fast locked.

"The noise of the door, the voice which spoke that fearful word, could be no imagination," said Coello.

"This vast and vaulted place might have echoed it," said Diego; "and the closing of some distant door in the gallery might have occasioned the alarm. We all know how strangely noises are conveyed and heard in the night, which never by day reach mortal ear."

"It is true," said Gonsalez, "and I the more believe it, seeing that at this moment we might be equally alarmed; for look, at that part of the hall where we were lately seated, opens another door, and a page advances; no doubt he comes to summon us to our sleeping chamber. Good night, Coello:

to-morrow, so soon as you shall be stirring, I would crave your company in the gardens of the castle, where Diego and myself will have some farther discourse with you, ere we seek the promised audience with the king. Good night."

"May the holy saints who guard us be with you!" said the pious Coello, who was particular in using holy expressions before the world; and one member of it, in the person of a young page, now stood near him, carying a torch to light the two friends, Diego and Gonsalez, to the chamber they were to occupy for the night.

The circumstance which had caused so much alarm still dwelt on the mind of Gonsalez, though he had made light of it to his companions; and desirous, if possible, to ascertain whether there was any real cause to suppose they might have been overheard by any listener, he artfully contrived to detain the page, and to lead him into discourse. Gonsalez spoke of the banquet, the amusements of the day, and lastly of the old hall. "There is a small doorway," said he, "near the great entrance. Did not you, my gentle page, or some of your fellows, pass without it to-night, after the banquet? I thought I heard you."

"Holy Mary! no," answered the page; "that door is never opened save by the queen, Isabella, or the king. It leads to the private garden, where no soul may enter without their sanction."

"Indeed!" said Gonsalez; "possibly then, but that can scarcely be, they walked forth to-night to look at the moon and stars?"

"In sooth they did not," replied the page; "for the king is no star-gazer, and ever retires, as he did to-night, by times to his chamber. And as to good old Queen Isabella, I myself held one of the torches as the ladies attended her to rest in her own apartment."

"They might suffer some one to go forth, perhaps?" said Gonsalez.

"No," answered the page, "that I will warrant they did not. After the king had left the camp to take up his residence here, I was in the hall when his lady-mother gave him the key of that very door, and she said something to him about it, but in so low a voice that no one heard what it was she spoke. The king took the key, but has never used it that I know of, and I am quite certain would never trust it out of his own keeping. They say it hath a curious spring, and is not like other locks in the doors of this old castle."

The page would have prattled on, but Gonsalez, now perfectly satisfied that the noise he had heard of a closing door could not have proceeded from the one in question, was unwilling to make the circumstance appear of any consequence; so, changing the discourse, that he might not too hastily dismiss the page after these inquiries, he let the youth talk on for a while on matters of indifference, and finally dismissed him for the night.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

He speaks with such a proud commanding spirit.
SHAKSPEARE.

WITH a steady step did the stranger enter the chamber in presence of the king; and, though he bent his head in token of salutation, he neither discovered his person, nor spoke, nor even moved from the spot where he had fixed himself till the chamberlain, who had been his conductor, was retired. Alonso rose as he surveyed, not without a keen eye of suspicion, the tall and muffled figure who stood before him, silent and motionless as a statue.

"Who art thou," said Alonso, "who in so few, yet such emphatic words, implored me to grant thee a secret audience this night? Art thou ready to fulfil the terms on which we meet, promised by thyself in this written scroll, That the desire of my heart should be fulfilled? Answer: we are not here to interpret gestures when words may tell thy purpose. Speak freely: no ear listens but mine own. Say, wilt thou fulfil this promise?"

"The true tongue," replied the stranger, "will ever fulfil the purpose of the true heart."

"Ha!" exclaimed Alonso, "thine betrays thee. Thy speech tells me thou art a Moor. Thou comest to bring me intelligence of the boy, Ferdinand. So do I read thy purpose. Give the youthful prince again to these arms, and the desire of my heart will be fulfilled indeed. Thou hast brought tidings of the boy."

"No," replied the stranger, "I know not where he may be found."

"Not know where he may be found!" repeated Alonso hastily, and in a tone which expressed his extreme disappointment; "wherefore then seek us? wherefore hold out such a promise as this—to fulfil the desire of our heart, would we but this night grant thee an audience; an audience in secret? Ha! what is thy intent? It may be treachery; but Alonso fears no man. He is armed, and ready to meet assault. Yet beware, a word of mine would summon hither the guard, who could lay manacles on thy base limbs ere thou couldst effect thy purpose—if it be treacherous."

"He who seeks the lion in his den," replied the stranger with unmoved composure, "must be ready and willing to fall a sacrifice should the king of the forest start up in wrath against him. Did he come as a secret destroyer, he would not seek to rouse him from his lair, but rather to aim the shaft under covert of an ambush. Even so, king Alonso, would it be with him who now stands before thee, ready—if it be thy will to rise in wrath against him—to suffer what thou canst inflict; or, if thou wilt look on him in peace, to parley with thee of those things that concern thy dearest hopes."

"You speak in riddles," said Alonso: "give a plain sense to a plain purpose, if such brings you hither. For what cause do you seek me?"

"I come," replied the stranger, "to treat with thee, O king! for the deliverance of Hamet, the son of Alcanzor; doomed, as I learned but this day, to bonds, tortures, and death."

"And dost thou pretend to offer terms to save the life of a Moorish youth," replied the king, "when you have no power to fulfil my soul's dearest wish, by restoring Ferdinand? The slave Hamet dies."

"The prince shall live!" exclaimed the stranger, in a high and indignant tone. "Hamet was never born to be a slave."

The king looked surprised; for though he held in contempt, even in suspicion, the extraordinary way the stranger had taken to gain access to him, nevertheless, from his words, manner, and air, he felt convinced he had not a common man to deal with. "Who art thou, I demand," said Alonso, "thus boldly to adventure thyself into our presence, and presume to speak of asking mercy for a Moorish slave which not one of our own court would dare so much as name to us, unless Ferdinand were restored? Who art thou? doff thy muffling hood."

"Anon, thou shalt know me," said the stranger. "But I am here trusting thy good faith to do me no wrong. It were unworthy a king—a king who boasts himself a knight of Christian chivalry—to compel the stranger who trusts to the guard of Alonso's honour, to do that which might bring danger on himself. I stand here to make terms with thee before I reveal myself to thy knowledge or thy sight."

"Thou make terms!" said the king scornfully. "Thou a Moor, an unknown Moor, accursed in race and faith, thus to address us, and at the very moment thou art within our power!"

"Thy power I fear not," answered the stranger; "since I came not hither without having taught my heart to meet *danger* freely. My body is in thy power. For my mind, it

is not thine to shake its firmness. It soars above thy threats as largely as doth the eagle, who is on the wing to mount the free blue heavens. I come to make terms that shall fulfil the desire of thy heart, and save Hamet the son of Alcanzor. Promise me his life, and ere the gates of morning open to the golden light, I will place in thy hands thy greatest foe, to suffer in his stead. I will yield to thee the Talba, to meet death, so Hamet may be spared."

"What!" cried the king in astonishment; "canst thou do this? shall that accursed wizard, who has defied our arms, drenched our land in blood, made children fatherless, and widowed wives, shall he be ours?"

"Ay," replied the stranger, "thine, thine, to torture or to kill, so thou wilt spare the youthful Hamet, and give him to his widowed mother's knees."

"Moor," said Alonso, "your words are no less confident than bold; yet I see not how you can fulfil them. This day our scouts brought us word that the Talba was in arms, awaiting but a reinforcement of his allies to assail us within these walls."

"And had they come," replied the stranger, "the Talba would have thundered at your gates; fire and sword should have delivered Hamet. But his allies came not; Don Sanchez and his Christian hosts have abandoned him. They no longer needed the Talba, on being reconciled to thee, and so they broke faith with him.

"Thou hast some plan, then," said Alonso, "to surprise the Talba in his camp. I doubt it not: Moor, I will trust thee. Speak thy purpose, and the thousand pieces of gold, set on the Talba's head, are thine."

"King," answered the Moor, "I sell not human blood for the dust of the earth, be it hardened into silver or the richest gold. Hamet is my prince, the son of my dead king. To save him, and not to do an act of treachery, I offer thee the only means that may satisfy thy vengeance; then the desire of thy heart will be fulfilled. Alas! I know not where Ferdinand may be found, or I had this night restored him to thy bosom. Grant my prayer. Pledge thy royal word to spare Hamet, safe in life and limb, and ere the star of Zohora gives promise of the morn, the Talba is thine."

Alonso paused, he paced the apartment with hurried steps, passed his hand across his forehead and looked doubtfully upon the stranger, as if he would penetrate through the coverings that shrouded his face and head. "What assurance canst thou give me," he at length said, "should I consent to this?"

"The assurance is in thy own hands, Alonso," replied the stranger. "If I fulfil not my word, let Hamet die the death."

"Be it so then," said the king: "Hamet is spared and the Talba——"

"Dies!" said the stranger, as he cast back the mantle in which he was shrouded. "Alonso, strike! The Talba will not raise a hand to resist thee; not more sacred is the law of the prophet to him, than the word that is spoken by his lips. Strike, O king! My breast I bare to meet thy steel, and Hamet lives!"

"Art thou the Talba?" said Alonso, as he started back, and surveyed with wonder, not less than admiration, the enthusiastic and devoted expression of the Moor's countenance, while he stood before the king with an air of fearless majesty, his dark eyes raised to heaven, his chest bare, as he held back, with his strong and tawny hand, the garments which had covered a breast swelling with all the noblest feelings that dignify or exalt human nature, there planted by the great Author of nature, to become in the soul of the unenlightened infidel as "a law unto himself."

Alonso, who though insensible to pity and every gentler feeling of a Christian, still possessed that attribute of a warrior king, a high estimation of the great and the heroic even in an enemy, when no sudden burst of passion obscured his judgment or prejudiced his feelings, was struck with that admiration which becomes involuntary praise, when he said in a voice full of energy, "Can such generosity of spirit live in the bosom of a Moor? Talba, thou art the most deadly foe I have encountered in war, but thou art the greatest——Close thy garments, Alonso is not an executioner. Not my hand must do the deed. Thou hast ransomed Hamet with the best blood of all thy race."

"It shall flow freely," said the Talba; "and thy ready acceptance of my life to spare the life of my prince, the last prince of our fallen people, has indeed subdued me. Alonso, in life I was thy foe; in death I will be thy friend. Hear my words, and profit by them. Despise not the counsels of the Talba; for time, that has numbered years upon his head, has, like the autumn's sun that brings to fruit the golden harvest, taught him the wisdom of experience. With my death, well do I read it in the book of fate, falls this war of the Moorish hosts. Listen to my counsels, and a happy peace—peace full of mercy as the eye of heaven—shall give repose to thy arms, and comfort to thy days."

"Speak on," said Alonso: "one so bold to meet death, so true of faith, can never utter falsehood. I will mark each word that falls from thy lips, brave man, with as much reverence as if it were the dictates of my father's spirit. I dreamed of him last night." Alonso said this in a manner so full of gravity, that it seemed to shew he thought his dream had been portentous; for amongst the many contradictory points in his character was that of a sufficient share of superstition, though he had never displayed much reverence or favour for the church.

Hassan continued to address Alonso with a tone and manner in which there was all the force and solemnity of truth, whilst he appeared wholly unmoved by the fate that awaited him:—"King," said he, "you know not the Moorish character. You think us base, insensible to honour, cruel and reckless in the hour of victory. Such you deem the Moors."

"Such have I found them," answered the king.

"If there are those amongst us who would act thus," said the Talba, "it is thy own oppression that has made them thus unworthy. To enslave the Moor renders him base and cunning. Like the palm tree of his native land, his mind will rise vigorous, lofty, and fruitful, when freedom, his birthright, is his own; but cast on him the chains of slavery, and, like the tree when transplanted to a cold ungenial clime, where every noble property that is in its nature dwindles and decays till it becomes a worthless trunk that hath no fruit, the Moor in slavery will soon become base as his condition. Mark then my counsel. Your Christian brother, Don Sanchez, has forsaken those allies who would have died true to him. I censure him not; for he has turned to his brother, and the leopard consorts not with the lion, when its own kind will bear it company. Your Christian hosts have abandoned our people, and though we may resist to death, alone we could not withstand the combined powers of thyself and thy brother. Your disunion, your weakness, was our strength."

"I know it," said Alonso; "but Algarva——"

"Algarva," cried the Talba, "cannot long hold out. The Moorish tribes from Africa that have fallen on it are ill armed, ill disciplined; still may they so far carry on the contest as to shed much Christian blood ere thou canst subdue them. Make thy peace, therefore, betimes; shew mercy to the Moor, and goad him not on, like a bull in the arena, till you rouse his fierceness into madness, and war becomes a scene of carnage, unsparing alike to age or sex, terrific in its nature, and

no longer an open contest of man to man in the battle-field. Offer a merciful peace; the Moors are in no condition to refuse it. Let such as remain in Portugal live free by wholesome labour, unfettered. Let there be no slavery, and trust me there will be no rebellion against thee. It is the last counsel of the Talba, who would have died for his people; and who, but that Allah has ordained it otherwise, would never have cast down his arms in peace, till he should have attempted to recover Algarva for Hamet, the son of Alcanzor."

"It was, then, to replace Hamet on the throne of thy Moslem master, now dead, that you entered on this wild war?" said the king.

"It was," replied the Talba; "and to avenge his father's death. Think, Alonso, of that devoted prince. Thou art a king, noble in war, and of an ancient race; but thy honours, thy descent, compared to the great Alcanzor, were but as a thing of yesterday. A hundred Moorish kings had worn the diadem thou didst tear from his manly brow. I was of his kindred; I fought by his side till my blood ran like a fountain from my wounds. Alcanzor became thy captive, thy slave. I escaped present death and bonds; but I followed his fallen fortunes into captivity. His noble widow and her highborn son have I served in life, and now do I bless the prophet's name, that I may die to save him."

"Thou art great in mind, Moor," said Alonso, who, as he listened to the discourse of the Talba, seemed lost in wonder to find so much of that high spirit which is held sacred in chivalry could belong to one not within its bond. "I would," added the king, "thou wert one of a better race."

"Our race," said the Talba, as his eye dilated and glowed with the high thoughts he entertained for his ancient people, —"our race is descended from the favoured and chosen people of God. The dark sons of Ismael once looked on Allah face to face as on a familiar friend, though shining in the majesty of heaven,—Abraham, the father of Ismael; Moses, the first prophet of the law, spoke to God in the cloud amid the thunderings and the lightnings of Sinai. Those elements of fire and air burst as the emblems of his power to destroy; but Allah made them as the hand-maiden of gentle peace; for, whilst the tempest of the Almighty rolled on the holy mountain, he gave forth the law to save; thus speaking in terror, but acting in mercy. Oh, that earthly kings would do as much for man!"

"Canst thou speak thus, who art said to deal in arts that unite thee with the fiends of hell?" said Alonso.

"I deal not with the wicked spirits of Eblis," replied Hassan: "the book of Allah, those far and out-stretched heavens, and those bright stars, that light a thousand worlds, such are the counsellors of the Talba, as he contemplates God in his mighty works. Valley and mountain, the boundless and ever-breathing deeps, the pattering rain and the soft dew, these, oh Allah! are thine; the green earth is thine, and every living thing therein; these, as well as thy resplendent stars, have secrets far beyond the common eye, and these have I studied with that holy awe which fills the breast of him who would search out the mysteries of nature."

"Such, then, are the studies that have gained thee the name of a Moorish enchanter," said Alonso; "and the Talba proves to be no other than a philosopher, like those of the ancient world."

"I am what I have said," replied Hassan. "Different nations have different names for the same thing. With us a Talba is a title of honour."

"And well does it become thee," said Alonso. "Moor! thou art like a jewel in its rough state: thou art dark to the eye; but the lustre within thy mind is of exceeding light. Thou art my prisoner."

"Ay," said the Talba, "the ransom of Hamet. I am ready to bear thy bonds; and these arms," he added, as he stretched them abroad, "these arms that have resisted thee in battle, shall now yield themselves to thy chains, as gently as doth the lamb that is bound for the sacrifice. King, I am ready. Lead me to death; I will not deny thy right to bind on me cords or chains."

"Moor," said Alonso, "I will bind on thee chains, but such as shall be stronger than those of iron. Thy own greatness of mind shall be the bonds in which I will hold thee captive. Thou hast passed thy word, as my prisoner, in ransom for Hamet."

"Ay," said the Talba, "my word is passed, and may not be recalled. Prisoner is written on the forehead of Hassan. His doom is in thy hand."

"Then take thy life," said Alonso. "By heaven there is that in thee would strike the axe from the hand, even hadst thou in these wars shed the blood of my own body. I will trust to the truth, which binds thy spirit in honour, with more assurance that it cannot fail me than I would rely on dungeons treble walled in strength to confine thy limbs. Moor, thou art free—yet a liberated prisoner;—and I will this night trust

thee to do me a service that shall render me the best thanks thou canst give for sparing thee thy life."

"But Hamet——" said the Talba.

"Not a hair of his head shall suffer," replied Alonso: "I pledge thee the word of a king to guard the boy in safety as I would my own. For policy, and not for vengeance, will I still hold him. Moor, thou art powerful with thy people. Against us thou canst not bear arms, for I have thy word to consider thyself still as our prisoner. Go, then, search out amongst thy own people the youthful Ferdinand, bring him harmless to these arms, and then will I treat with thee, who wert the leader of those Moorish hosts, on the terms of such a peace as thou this night hast recommended to me. Alonso, who honours valour in a foe, will be proud to shew the Talba, that an infidel Moor shall not in greatness of mind surpass a Christian king."

"I will do this," said Hassan: "I know not by what means Prince Ferdinand came into the hands of our people; but if Moors still hold him, I will speedily find out his retreat. They will yield him up to me on the least word of my command. It was my purpose to have sought out the Christian prince, in the hope, by restoring him, to save Hamet; but the speedy doom thou hadst passed on the noble sharif allowed no time for such a search: I could but offer myself as his ransom. Now will I use my best efforts that the desire of thy heart may be fulfilled."

"Stay," said Alonso: "there are those who would not spare thee as I have done, were it known that the Talba, our most dreaded foe, was within these walls. Some, too, there may be lurking without who are warmed with wine and revelry. Thou art unarmed."

"I came so," answered the Talba, "to give thee full assurance that my purpose to die for Hamet was sincere."

"Take my dagger, then," said Alonso, "and take also this key. Pass through the hall direct from the gallery, and make thy way, noiseless as a gliding spirit of the night, towards a small low door to the left of the great entry. This key moves a curious spring: the door will lead thee into our private gardens, where a postern gives exit to the open plain. Go instantly, and say to him who keeps the postern-watch of the gardens—The Brothers: it is the pass-word to night, suggested by the tie of amity so newly sealed between ourself and Don Sanchez. Instantly quit these walls, and return not till you bring Ferdinand. For your life, as you value Hamet, as you

would desire an end to this cruel war, see me no more till you gain tidings of the prince. At this crisis, so much are our people incensed against the Moors for the loss of our grandchild, that not even I, the king, might save thee didst thou this night fall into their hands. Away, away!"

"I go," said the Talba. "And not with more zeal did I hasten hither to save Hamet than I now will use to recover the youthful prince of the Christians, and bring him to thy knees; for thou hast spared the widow's only son. To thee, Alonso, I will be a true prisoner, though at large."

"I doubt it not," said the king; "thy greatness of soul hath made me great. It has this night saved the life of thy Moorish prince, and me from the guilt of shedding the blood of a foe so noble as thyself, whose sword was laid at my feet. Peace be with thee; success attend thy steps."

The Talba departed, and followed the directions of the king. He passed in safety without the castle, and proceeded on his way, in order to put into immediate execution a plan he had already conceived to fulfil the mission on which he was sent, for the speedy restoration of Prince Ferdinand.

CHAPTER XXIX.

> What sudden anger's this? How have I reap'd it?
> He parted frowning from me, as if ruin
> Leap'd from his eyes.
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

THE reader will have seen, from the event we have recorded in the last chapter, that, notwithstanding the many acts of violence which had disgraced Alonso, there was in his character a quick susceptibility of what is great and generous. Would that we could always record of him so fair a picture as the last! but, alas! truth demands others nothing akin to it. Alonso's character, like the garden of the sluggard, was a confused admixture of the useful and the noble with what is vile and worthless. Like those noisome weeds and briars (which suffered to grow wild, frequently out-top or obscure the more wholesome productions of the soil), did the unrestrained violence of his passions too often gain the ascendency, or obscure the native beauty of his virtues.

Alonso's frequent rebellions against his late father, his murder of the venerable bishop, who reproved him for those rebellions, his persecution of his brother, Don Sanchez (whom, as we have seen, he afterwards so generously received into favour), are all acts that shew the unbridled license of his evil passions when they once gained the mastery, and must ever remain fearful blots in the character of a king, who in many other respects was deserving the affections of his people and the praise of posterity. Unlike the noble Talba, whose virtues, arising from fixed principles, were uniform in their practice, Alonso did no act that was great but by fits and starts; for when once his suspicions, his jealousy, or his pride, had awakened the sleeping lion, his passions became as destructive as they were sudden and violent.

We have ventured to offer these remarks on the character of the king, as some clue to what we have now to relate, which would otherwise appear not only extraordinary, but improbable in the conduct of Alonso. On the day following his secret interview with the Talba, it was observed, by the

whole court, that he appeared with a cheerfulness, and even a kindness of manner to all about him, that was somewhat unusual; and this sunshine, so apparent in the king, reflected its light on all around. It was hailed by his venerable mother as a proof of the inward satisfaction he experienced on being reconciled to his brother. Alonso, in truth, had seldom felt so happy; for he enjoyed that approval of conscience which never fails to attend the mind after having done a good action. It comes like the visitation of a spirit, whose office it is to make record of the generous and the just.

The king attended the council in the same mood, and it was with great satisfaction that Azevedo, and the more mild or prudent of his counsellors, heard him hint that, perhaps, the better mode to restore the tranquillity of Algarva would be to offer pardon to all who should lay down their arms, and to enter on terms of a merciful peace with the rebellious and harassed Moors. We do not dwell on the determination of the assembly, since it is foreign to what remains to be told by us. The king, however, quitted the chamber in the same happy temper; and, ere he granted the promised audience to Gonsalez and Diego, he ordered that preparations should be made for a hunting party so soon as it should be concluded. This was hailed by all; and soon were his orders fulfilled.

Huntsmen, horses, hounds, bugles, and all the joyous attendants of such a scene, were ready, expecting the coming of the king to mount his horse and away to the green wood, where he was ever the first and the boldest to follow up and enjoy the sylvan sports. An hour past, and still Alonso was closeted with those worthies who held him in secret debate. Still the hunters waited, till men began to think that some business of import must occasion a delay so extraordinary. Many were the whispers, many the conjectures that followed, as the impatient nobles and courtiers paced the court, looked at the sun which was rising to the meridian, and ever and anon turned an eager eye to the door whence the majesty of Portugal was expected to sally forth. The very animals seemed impatient, as the horses, little accustomed so long to stand still when harnessed for the field, neighed, champed the bit, or tossed their heads, as if desirous for action; whilst the hounds in leash looked with a wistful and asking eye upon the huntsman. Still no king appeared, and suspense gave rise not merely to conjecture but to an intense feeling of curiosity, as to the cause of such delay.

At length the ominous door opened, and the first who appeared from under it was the king, advancing with hasty strides to the platform before the castle gates. As he strode down the steps to mount his horse, the change in his appearance and demeanour was too obvious to escape the least observing eye. His cheek was flushed, his brows bent, and hasty glances shot from his eyes on those about him: there was, too, that quivering of the under lip, which not a courtier present but knew, by experience, was a sure and certain sign that the passions of Alonso were aroused to a fearful extent. Yet in the present instance one thing, so different from his ordinary mode of shewing extreme anger, struck all as remarkable; it was, that Alonso spoke not a word of passion. He was not merely silent, but at some moments appeared abstracted and even sullen. The space afforded for these observations was brief, but be it remembered that it was a king who became the theme of general observation amongst dependents and courtiers; not a sign, therefore, not a shadow of his mood, escaped the self-interested eyes which looked upon him: all feared for themselves, yet not knowing what there was to apprehend; for scarcely any one present but at times had felt the effects of a sudden storm in the royal hemisphere. The very huntsman, who for more than twenty years had blown the note that commanded the start for the chase, gave a low and uncertain breath to the bugle, as if he feared to disturb that silence in his master, which, like the deep stillness sometimes preceding a thunder storm, was reckoned but as an augury of its fury when it should burst around.

The king, however, mounted; and, merely ordering that the Alauntes (a species of dog used in boar hunts) should be brought out, as he hoped to pursue the boar, rode leisurely out of the court without noticing any one. Diego and Gonsalez followed, likewise mounted for the chase. These, whose strange conference with the king had produced so sudden a change in his manner, did not miss the aim of inquiring eyes. In the pale countenance of Diego there was strong evidence of recent agitation, and he looked down as if conscious it was so; but in the hardened features of Gonsalez nothing could be read. As well might the eye fix itself on the surface of a rock to find what lies deep within it, as men could hope to trace, in the expression of his countenance, the hidden purpose of his mind. Arias Coello did not join the hunters; but he also had been seen to steal out the last from the ominous door of this secret audience; and, as if he feared the very presence of

sun and air, was remarked to glide away along the old dark gallery that led to his apartment.

The chase, though an occupation, could this day scarcely be called a pleasure with the king. He rode as it were mechanically forward with his late counsellors, Diego and Gonsalez at his side; and though, when what was called "a singular of boars," meaning a single boar, was hunted out from his covert by the fierce Alaunts, the king followed up the chase, and even threw a spear at the bristled animal, yet it was with little spirit, and so ill aimed that the spear struck, and broke short, against an ancient oak tree of the forest.

"I see your grace needs my help to day," said Gonsalez, as he threw his own spear, which struck the monster in the throat.

The king, as if some other thought than that of the sports occupied his mind, and that he applied to it this expression of Gonsalez, said, as a bitter smile stole from his lip, and his eye fixed itself on the hard-hearted nobleman "Gonsalez, thou hast a sure hand and a bold breast."

"Both, I trust, will never desert your grace in extremity," was the ready answer of Gonsalez.

"It is well," said the king; "but by the rood we will hunt no more to day; there is no life in the sport. The boar falls without a struggle, the very dogs seem tamed, and the bugle sounds dull and dead to my ears."

"Your grace's huntsman gets old," said Gonsalez; "he has forgot the true flourish of a mort-note."

"A mort-note!" cried the king, "it is a mort-note indeed. We will hear it no longer;" and turning his horse's head, he rode at full speed back to the castle, closely followed by Gonsalez. The king's departure was understood as the signal to break up the chase, and all quitted the field.

At the usual hour, dinner was served in the great hall. The following brief discourse, which passed soon after the covers were withdrawn, will serve to shew in what frame of mind the king shared in the repast:—

"His grace is much moved to-day," observed the Bishop of Guarda to the queen-consort, Beatrice, as he conversed with her somewhat apart from the company. "I fear me there has happened something of deep import; for never did I see the king, since he has been a king, look as he did this day, when the health of Don Pedro was pledged. To you, noble queen, my daughter in my spiritual function, I will dare speak my thought, knowing the gentleness of your heart. There

was in the brow of Alonso, or I know him not, an augury of death."

"I marked it well," said Beatrice of Castile; "nor has my royal husband's strange demeanour throughout this day escaped the eye of an anxious wife. Have you observed, too, bishop, he has spoken much with those cavaliers, so newly returned to court, Gonsalez and Diego? And the taxman Coello, whom I have ever held in suspicion; he also has been closeted with them and the king. What can this mean? what can move my husband thus? Another thing likewise surprised me. I saw Alonso whispering, as in earnest conference, with his favourite esquire of the body. But when I drew near, the king suddenly stopped, and began to talk of his corslet, as if it needed some repair. Other matter was in his thought, or I am much mistaken."

"Madam," said the bishop, "dare I speak my mind? dare I ——"

"Speak," cried the queen: "thou art a man of truth; dare, therefore, to shew me thy thought. And, holy father, you are my confessor."

"I am the confessor, also, of Don Pedro," said the bishop, in a manner peculiarly significant; "I liked not the king's looks when his son's health was pledged, nor the way in which he put down the untasted cup, as if conscience-struck."

"Know you aught, holy father, concerning Don Pedro, that, were it likewise known to the king, could thus stir his feelings?" inquired Beatrice, as if she would read the very thoughts of the bishop, as she eagerly gazed on his face. "Yet," she added, correcting herself, "you are Don Pedro's confessor and friend; and of you I must not ask this: pardon me."

"Noble lady," answered the Bishop of Guarda, "I may not reply in direct terms to your question; yet thus much, circumstances, which I deem so alarming, sanction me to say—I fear there is cause to apprehend that if the king knew some secret matters that are known to me, his anger would be fearful as that of the chafed lion, whom Alonso so well images in war or passion, against his son—against another living being. I—I fear danger in this dark mood of the king, and that on Don Pedro it may fall, perhaps, in the tenderest point."

"I cannot fully interpret your words," said the queen; "but they are yours, holy man, and, therefore, I know them to speak truth. If there is danger, how can I avert it? Tell me; speak, I beseech you. I am a mother, I hope a loving

mother, to Don Pedro; still am I the wife of Alonso, whom I fear, and you know how little he heeds woman's counsel. May be the king is angered because his grandchild Ferdinand is not restored."

"No," replied the bishop; "I think not that circumstance is the cause; for Prince Ferdinand was equally missing this morning, when the king appeared before all so full of grace and kindness. It was at the mention of Don Pedro's name that he became so strangely disturbed; and from some words I heard drop from him, as he spoke before dinner to Gonsalez, I suspect thy husband, lady, is about to leave the castle. I heard him say, Let the horses be brought round to the postern-gate of the gardens."

"Look!" cried the queen; "even now Gonsalez glides up to the side of the king as he sits on the daïs. Mark with what earnest gestures Alonso discourses with him. See! he rises, he quits the hall. Yonder he goes towards the entry of his private chamber. I will follow; I will seek my husband; and if I can, learn his purpose."

"Do so, madam," said the bishop; "and if you find there is cause to suspect it to be dangerous, fail not to let me know it; for ——" he looked round, and then added in a low voice, "I will find the means to apprise Don Pedro. I know where he may be found. The king thinks him at this moment with the men-at-arms; but Don Pedro——"

"Tell me, holy man, in pity to a mother's feelings, tell me, where is my son? I will not betray it to his incensed father."

The Bishop of Guarda paused a moment, as if doubtful; at length he said, "Noble Beatrice, I know you to be wise and good. I think there may be some danger threatens your son, and another being dear to him. I will trust you as far as I may with honour. I received but this morning a letter from Don Pedro, written in much haste, to inform me he was about to visit the monastery of Santa Clara at Coimbra, there to meet, at her earnest solicitation, the lady Ines de Castro. The prince complained that a messenger from her to him had been delayed on the road, in consequence of his being a Moor: that he feared the lady Ines would suffer by his delay; but the moment he had made some necessary preparation to leave an army, of which he was in command, not an instant would he neglect her summons. He hoped ere night-fall to join her at Coimbra. Now, well may we guess the prince's danger, should his father but suspect this, after the late events regarding this unhappy lady."

"Danger?" said the queen: "ay, such danger as I shudder to think upon; but not so much to Don Pedro. Holy father, even you know not, as I do, the dreadful jealousies of the king towards her, who I think is much and honourably beloved by my son. I will not abuse your confidence. I will instantly seek Alonso. Attend me in my oratory. I will return speedily. You shall know all. Possibly what I shall learn will be found of import to my misguided son. Farewell."

The Bishop of Guarda bowed, and the queen lost not a moment in seeking her husband. The king was in his own apartment. He had made some slight alteration in his dress; and Beatrice observed that he had thrown over his shoulders a loose mantle, in which he was accustomed to robe himself when about to ride forth on a journey. The queen had entered the room in her usual manner, in the hope that he would first address her; but the same dark, lowering, and sullen expression was in his countenance. No one, but an anxious wife and mother, would have ventured to break the reserve which a temper like Alonso's chose to adopt at this moment.

"You ride forth, my lord?" said the queen: "shall I summon the groom of the chambers to wait on you? You are unattended."

"Not so," replied Alonso, "when our queen waits and asks our pleasure. Beatrice of Castile, you would know whither I ride," continued the king, fixing on her a look that had in it stern displeasure. "Why is our privacy broken in upon even by you, to gratify woman's curious spirit?"

"Speak not thus, my lord," said the queen, in the gentlest manner, as tears started into her eyes: "why are you thus harsh? What if you have spoken truth? Is there a crime in what I do? Think you, my lord, I have no eyes, no feelings? Think you I can witness the strong passions which have this day shaken your inmost soul, and yet feel no interest to learn the cause which thus moves my husband?"

"Is it so?" said the king: "I did not think I had so played the woman to let my looks betray the anger of my heart. I thought I could be like the stubborn Moors, who can meet even death itself, or give it, without a change of aspect."

"Alas!" said the queen: "what dark purpose do these words import? What may I not think? what not fear! Alonso, I am your wife."

"Ay," answered the king; "one who should bring us children and not counsel, though we grant you are the partner of our throne."

"And more than that," said the queen with spirit, "the sharer of your weal and woe; the partner of your bosom. It is my right, and I have never forfeited it by abusing it, to share your confidence. Give it me then. I claim it as a right, yet would receive it as a favour. There is a cause for this strange demeanour. Troubled thoughts are on your brow, and your heart is too full for words to express its feelings. Give me to know the cause."

"The cause!" cried Alonso; "there is indeed a cause; but ask it not, breathe it not, know it not, even if you suspect it: for, as I am a man, a king, I will fulfil the purpose of my mind. I have sworn it by my father's soul. When did I break that oath?"

"If in passion," said the queen, "you have sworn to do that which you may hereafter repent; sorrow for the hasty oath; it were better than to sorrow hereafter for the sin."

The king started, as he said eagerly, "How know you it is sin? Oh, you have exceeding cunning; you would fathom me; you would pluck up from my secret soul the knowledge of my purpose. But you learn naught from Alonso, saving, what you already know, that he is about to depart the castle, and that without noise or preparation. Use discretion, for it is our command that you are silent."

"Whither go you, my lord?" said the queen: "tell me but that, whither go you?"

"To act as becomes a king," said Alonso; "who would guard his honour and his blood from stain."

"This is no answer," exclaimed Beatrice: "whither, whither do you go?"

"To Coimbra, woman!" cried Alonso, with a voice in which all the smothered passion of his soul broke forth with fearful violence. "I go to Coimbra, there to visit one who would render thee and thine dishonoured, disgraced, even as myself; one who would break down the goodly fabric of our ancient house; one who would lop that green bough which blossoms with so fair a promise, and in its stead plant briars and thorns, vile, foreign, rotten branches, to grow beneath the lustre of our crown till they o'ertop it. Let me go; detain me not; you shall hear of what I do:—justice, an act of justice; ay, justice, that great attribute of kings!"

"Your words are wild," said the queen: "whom seek you at Coimbra? tell me but whom!"

Alonso was silent a moment. He paused, looked on his wife, and said, as he gazed on her intently, "Whom do I seek!

and what are you who ask it? One of the same accursed sex, who from the first have heaped on man misery, guilt, and ruin. It is woman I seek, a woman: in what other shape could wickedness be found complete?"

"Oh! go not to Coimbra," said the queen: "go not in this mood. On my knee I do beseech you. Be patient, all shall yet be well."

"Well!" said Alonso: "ay, marry, it shall be well, as you say, very well: yet think at what a price!—that I, a king, a man, a warrior king, who have drawn the sword where men were proud to follow in the battle-field, should now be driven to this, to——"

"To what?" exclaimed the queen. "Give me thy weapon. I will keep it till this passion shall have passed; and reason once more holding her calm seat within your soul, it may be trusted to your hand with safety: nay, give me thy weapon. Thy looks are dark; thy utterance thick; thy words wild:—the straining of thy eager eye tells me, King Alonso, thou hast thoughts of blood within thy mind. Nay, start not, I will be heard. You go not to Coimbra, and in this temper, there to seek a helpless, an unhappy——" The queen stopped, for in her extreme agitation she had forgotten the charge to silence on this subject, given to her by the Bishop of Guarda.

"To seek an unhappy woman," said the king, filling up the sentence the queen had left broken: "it is true; and that woman—Ines de Castro."

The deep and peculiar tone in which Alonso said this, the strong emphasis he laid on her name, struck the queen with terrible forebodings; and, dropping on her knee before the king, she caught his hand, as she said, "As you are a man, a father, a Christian, harm her not; have pity on her. If she has offended you, let her answer it when you are yourself to judge her calmly; but go not in this temper; for if you seek her thus there may be——"

The king started back at hearing this half-finished sentence, so plainly alluding to a dreadful purpose; but, recovering himself, he said, in a calmer tone, "Alonso is not cruel. If justice demands a victim, it is the law, and not the king, who does the act; the eternal law of justice, which sees not the person but the crime. Yet, wherefore this agitation? I have not said what may be my purpose."

"But your looks! your fearful looks!" continued the queen: "when you named the unhappy Ines, your looks told the rest."

"I will not name her then," said Alonso, wildly: "I will

not name a thought that wanders to her; I would shroud my very thinkings from the eye of day, lest darkness change its light, nor whisper to the babbling wind a word that should betray the deep, dread purpose of my soul. I go; follow me not; speak not of what is past, as you value the obedience of a wife, the honour of a husband. Be secret, say not where I go. When we meet again, we will debate of this matter calmly. And what will it then seem, but a tale for a winter's hearth?" Alonso laughed when he spoke these last words, as if he would force himself to treat lightly the subject of his thoughts. But his laughter was such as curdled the very blood with its unnatural sound; it came like the mockery of a fiend, whilst his breast was struggling with fearful passions.

Beatrice would have again interfered: but Alonso burst from her, waving her back with his hand; and, with a look that she understood too well to dare disobey it, forbade her to pursue him. She remained, for some minutes, motionless on the spot, where the king burst from her, till hearing the trampling of horses beneath the windows, in the inner court, she stole to the casement, and saw her husband mounted. Gonsalez was presenting to him a stirrup-cup of wine. The king swallowed the contents with frightful avidity, threw the cup to a page, dashed spurs into his horse's sides, and, followed by Gonsalez, Diego, Arias Coello, and his esquire of the body, immediately quitted the castle by a private entrance.

The queen watched till the cavalcade was lost to sight behind the brow of a hill; she then rushed from the chamber, flew to her oratory, and sinking, almost fainting into a chair, said to the Bishop of Guarda, who was awaiting her, "Holy father, the king has departed for Coimbra, I fear on a purpose I shudder but to think upon. No moment must be lost. Write to Don Pedro: despatch thy messenger on the swiftest steed that may be within the castle. Life or death is in his speed. We may yet preserve a helpless being, and the king from the blood-guiltiness I fear he meditates. Nay, look not doubtful. I saw his passion, I read the deed in his dark eye. Father, murder has looks that are unearthly. May God prevent the crime!"

The Bishop of Guarda needed no more exhortation. He wrote to warn Don Pedro of the threatened danger, and instantly despatched a messenger with the letter, in the hope it might reach the prince in time, as the bishop knew well the route he would take for Coimbra, and directed the messenger accordingly.

CHAPTER XXX.

The weary sun hath made a golden set,
And, by the bright track of his fiery car,
Gives token of a goodly day to-morrow.

SHAKSPEARE.

It now becomes necessary that we should take a retrospective view of those events which attended the unfortunate Ines de Castro, after her escape from the fortress of Death, to the period in which the Bishop of Guarda spoke of her being at Coimbra. The reader is aware that it was her intention to seek shelter beneath the walls of Santa Clara. Her motive for doing so was not that of absolute security; as, should Alonso know of her retreat, she would be just as liable to fall within the power of the king there as in any other place. A dear and sacred tie drew her to Santa Clara. She had not resolution to resist it; for it was long, very long, since she had folded her infant sons, Juan and Denis, to her heart; and they were at Coimbra.

At the date of our narrative, the monastic foundations of Portugal were not merely confined to the use of the monks or nuns who inhabited them. It was a circumstance of common occurrence for the king, the queen, and princes of the blood, occasionally to take up their residence in religious houses, and such being extensive in their buildings, in many instances not inferior to a royal palace, there was sufficient room to accommodate these noble guests without at all interfering with the more retired parts of the edifice devoted to the recluse. Santa Clara was frequently honoured with these visits; for the woods of Coimbra offered a favourite hunting spot for Don Pedro; and even Alonso had occasionally passed some days at the convent. It is needless to add that the royal bounties flowed in requital to the foundation, so that the good abbess took especial care such portions of her house as were set apart for the royal family should ever be in a state of readiness to receive them.

Don Pedro, when he fancied it necessary to conceal his unfortunate marriage with Ines, and the fruits of it, from his

father, had entrusted to the care of the Abbess of Santa Clara his young sons, Juan and Denis. He did not affect to disguise that they were his children, and threw out hints, sufficiently plain to be understood, that the favours he intended hereafter to bestow upon the convent would depend on the care and secresy with which they were kept from observation. The existence of such children, therefore, was little known beyond the walls of the convent.

It is needless to add that the public voice, which had so long proclaimed Don Pedro the passionate lover of Ines, suggested to the abbess the suspicion (amounting in her own mind to certainty) that no other than Ines could be the mother of these princely boys; but as this was a point not trusted to her confidence, the good lady had sufficient discretion never to breathe her suspicions to mortal ear; and whenever Ines had occasionally visited the children, the abbess affected to receive her as a person who, from the circumstance of her being sponsor to Prince Ferdinand, had an undoubted right to feel interested in the welfare of his half-brothers.

Coimbra had been a famous city ever since the times of the Romans, by whom it was originally built. A noble acqueduct and bridge, the work of that great people, who never conquered a country without civilising or benefiting it, endured for many ages; and we believe remain even to this day as monuments of their grandeur. At Coimbra, also, was the first university in Portugal, instituted by King Denis the Liberal, the father of Alonso. The city stood on a mountain in the province of Beira, watered at its base by the river Mondego, and surrounded with a country abounding with all those fruits that render this land as luxuriant as a garden.

The convent of Santa Clara, a place that now becomes important in our story, was a noble gothic edifice, and of such vast extent, that its lofty towers and battlemented walls, as they stood, like a crown to the mountain's head, had more the appearance of a castle than of a religious house. Its situation added much to the majestic character of the building. It was guarded in the rear by a precipitous hollow of the mountains, whose rugged sides were inaccessible to the human foot, though the wild goat was often seen to leap from point to point amid the sharp and broken rocks, to taste of the thyme and aromatic herbage that grew scantily upon their surface. In the direction from the city, a public path led to Santa Clara; another also wound up the mountain side, where it was tolerably easy of access, from a noble forest of pine trees, whose dark and

lofty tops afforded to the traveller, as he journeyed beneath them, a natural arcade full of grandeur, and of those deep shadows that create a sense of awe whilst they relieve the eye from the overpowering effects of unbroken light.

Around, for many miles distant, might be seen the beautiful perspective of mountain summits (whose sides were studded with pine and oak) rising in gradation; those nearest the eye bold and striking in their outline, whilst the mellowing hues of air and distance softened such as skirted the horizon into faint and airy forms that could scarcely be distinguished from the clouds.

The walls of Santa Clara, though sacred to religion, were evidently designed for purposes foreign to the mild and quiet thoughts that are supposed to accompany the devotee. These walls had been built at a time when the Moors possessed more than half the kingdom of Portugal, so that it was as necessary to render a convent as capable of defence as if it had been a castle. Many a monastic building, during former wars, had held out a siege against the infidels. But though the Moors had so lately been in a state of rebellion, their chief efforts having been confined to Algarva, the strong city of Coimbra feared nothing; and beyond the usual watch and ward, no additional precautions of defence were found necessary at Santa Clara.

Its venerable gateway therefore, flanked by gigantic towers, stood lonely as it were and silent; whilst the long embattled rampart, the watchtower, and the turret, shewed not a living thing upon them, save, perhaps, a bird of the mountains that fluttered round these ancient buildings to guard the young it cherished in some nest, formed amid the carvings of the gothic pinnacles or beneath the shelter of the vacant and deserted loop-hole and battlement. Within the walls was seen, arising above them, the chapel of the convent; a lofty and magnificent edifice, where kings and queens had contributed, with a lavish hand, to render its altars and shrines rich in the jewelled pomp of superstition.

It was after a journey in which nothing happened worthy of notice from the time of her escape, till her arrival at this place, that Ines de Castro and her faithful guide Cassim, towards evening gained the pine forest near the circuitous and narrow path that led to the convent. But ere she issued from beneath the gloom of the forest, she fixed her eyes on Santa Clara, that stood before her on the summit of the heights she was about to ascend.

Though all below partook of the solemn shade of the hour, the convent, from its elevated site, was lit up in the golden lustre of the departing sun; not a tower nor battlement but was distinct and dazzling.

As Inez gazed on its walls, sweet thoughts of her children stole over her mind. Long before she gained the summit of the mountain, the sunshine had passed from its towers and battlements, and Santa Clara stood dark, lonely, and majestic, imposing on the mind of the observer solemn feelings, subdued thoughts, that harmonised with the holy quiet of the scene. All was soon obscured by the approaching shades of night, save the great eastern window of the church, which, illumined by the tapers from within, like the power of that religion to whose service it had been raised, seemed to grow more bright as the outward world darkened around it. As Ines drew near, the solemn hymn to the Virgin Mother thrilled upon her ear, and she felt as if the strain spoke to her of her children. Ines paused, slowly approached the portal, nor did she summon the warder to give her entrance till the anthem had ceased: so deep was her veneration for those sacred sounds, she would not have interrupted them even to satisfy the longing of her heart by hastening to her infants.

When silence had once more resumed her reign, Cassim applied his lips to a large horn that hung without the gates. The Moor blew a clear strong blast that awakened the mountain echoes. It was answered by the warder, who speedily admitted Ines within the walls. He looked doubtfully on her Moorish guide; but the lady, who was no stranger to the warder of Santa Clara, having recommended him to be cared for as one who had well served her, Cassim was conducted to the apartment where poor strangers and servitors found their wants supplied in abundance. This night was he to tarry at the convent; and the lady Ines charged him not to depart on the next day without seeing her, as she had an especial commission which she intended to trust to his experienced fidelity. Cassim bowed respectfully, and, promising to fulfil her commands, retired, and left her to an interview with the Mother of the Sisters.

The Abbess of Santa Clara no sooner heard who awaited her, than, with as much haste as she thought became one of her dignity, she entered the Locutory, and welcomed the newly arrived guest with the most profound respect, and instantly summoned to her side one of those assistant nuns called Discreta, and gave orders the lady Ines de Castro should have

chambers in the suite always held in readiness for the royal family; and that the children, Juan and Denis, should be forthwith brought to her. Ines, however, having learned they were already in bed, declared she would not have them disturbed, but would look on them in their sleep; and thanking the abbess for her hospitality, followed the Discreta from the Locutory.

We do not attempt to portray the feelings with which Ines visited her children so dearly loved, so secretly held from the eye of the world, and so long absent from her sight. If our reader be a mother, she will fill up the picture without our aid; if so dear a name as that of a parent is not hers, we would request her but to blend the tenderest thoughts that have passed through her own mind with those which are most pure, most holy, and she will have an image of a fond mother's heart. Having for some time indulged feelings so dear to her, Ines softly kissed the downy cheeks of her sleeping children, and retired from their apartment to one adjoining, having chosen it on that account as her own. Here a second pleasure was reserved for her, and though less delightful than that she had just experienced, it was most welcome to her harassed mind, as it afforded her what, to the anxious and the unhappy, is a desired and salutary indulgence—the opportunity to pour her griefs into the bosom of a faithful friend: for great was her surprise when her own Ximena came into her room; that faithful Moorish maiden whom she had cherished for years, had enlightened with Christianity; who had witnessed the secret marriage of her mistress, and attended her in those hours of sorrow and anguish in which she had secretly become a mother.

Ximena satisfied the inquiries of Ines by telling her, that on the morning after the Talba and Prince Ferdinand had contrived her first escape from Cintra, she (Ximena) had sought the walls of Santa Clara, certain she should be admitted; as, when Don Pedro gave his children to the care of the abbess, he had entrusted no attendant but Ximena to conduct them to her house. The Moorish maiden, from the tender love she bore to their mother, had determined, therefore, to watch over the children, till she could once more resume her station by her mistress's side.

Thus much she told the lady Ines; but, fearful to give her unnecessary alarms, she did not communicate to her certain reports that had reached her ears from a favoured page who was about the person of Alonso. This youth had been sent to

Santa Clara to bear an offering, from the good queen Isabella, of thankfulness for the quarrel so happily terminated, by her interference, between Alonso and his brother. Ximena saw the page who came on this errand. She knew him well, and being desirous to gain intelligence from the court, at length drew from the youth an acknowledgment, under a charge of secresy, "that the king, in one of his passions, had dropt some words expressing his resentment against the lady Ines de Castro, for giving up Prince Ferdinand to the Moors." Ximena was prudeut as well as affectionate: she determined, therefore, not to distress her mistress by repeating such a tale unless she found it necessary to do so.

Perhaps it is needless to add that the lady Ines communicated to her humble friend all that occurred during her captivity in the fortress of Death. When Ximena heard that, under the pressure of strong circumstances, Ines had been driven to acknowledge to the hateful Diego her marriage with the prince, she instantly conjured her not to delay an hour in seeking an interview with Don Pedro.

It was the first wish of Ines's heart to see her husband, and, seconded by the counsels of her attendant, she wrote a letter to him, conjuring him, so soon as he should receive it, as he valued all that was most dear to him on earth, to come straight to Santa Clara, as she had that to communicate which would admit of no delay. Don Pedro was stationed with his men-at-arms not many miles from Coimbra; where he had taken his post with the intent to intercept the succours which had been spoken of by the Talba, in his interview with the king, as expected by him ere he was deserted by his Christian allies. Cassim was intrusted with the letter, and commanded that he should lose no time to gain admittance to the presence of Don Pedro.

These minor circumstances we deemed it necessary to state, since they will all be found of import in the sequel; and indeed often is it seen in human life that events, trifling in themselves, lead on to the greatest consequences. They are like links in a chain, parts that may not be disjoined without breaking the continuity of the whole.

CHAPTER XXXI.

> Methinks a woman of this valiant spirit
> Should, if a coward heard her speak these words,
> Infuse his breast with magnanimity.
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

How fondly, how anxiously, did Ines de Castro number the hours between that in which Cassim left the convent with her letter, and the time she fancied it probable Don Pedro might arrive to answer it in person. A day passed, he did not come; still she could hardly expect that Cassim could have made the journey, or that her husband as a commander in the field, could so instantly make arrangements to quit it, even for a brief space, in less time than had elapsed. To-morrow she thought he must arrive, and she endeavoured to comfort herself with the idea; but when the morrow came, her impatience arose to an acute and dreadful feeling of suspense. During the whole of the morning she scarcely stirred from her apartment, as it commanded an extensive view of the country, and her eyes wandered over it restless and eager to catch a glimpse of an approaching horseman, attended, perhaps, but by one or two persons; for she knew that Don Pedro would come as privately as possible to Coimbra.

Wearied with watching and repeated disappointment, she resigned her station near the window to Ximena. It was now that the lengthening shadows told how far the day was spent; and still Don Pedro had not arrived. At one moment Ines determined to endeavour to be more composed, and to give up all hope of seeing him on that day. At the next moment she listened, or would suddenly turn and ask Ximena if she could see any one issuing from the forest, or treading the ascent to the convent

"I descry nothing, lady," replied Ximena, "but a dull hazy sky, and the sun which, seen through it, looks like a ball fiery red; not a breath of air stirs, and there are but few clouds: yet, only hear, lady, that scream! It was of the eagle as he darted from his nest in the rock, and soared above our heads. And in the valley at the foot of the mountain I see the cattle

bound; even at this height can I hear their loud bellowings. Not a goat is to be seen on the ridges of the rocks. Lady, this will be a fearful night, though all is now so still."

"A fearful night, Ximena!" said Ines de Castro, in a melancholy tone, as some sad thought crossed her mind; "Will it be so? how know you?"

"Lady, I have lived for years among the mountains of Algarva, to which this of Coimbra is but as a little hill, and the signs I tell you never fail. Besides, did you not mark last night the shooting stars, and the burning meteors, that played with sight-dazzling fires about the heavens—I would that my lord were come."

"And so would I, Ximena," said Ines, with a sigh. "I cannot tell, girl, wherefore it is so, but my heart is heavy within me: there are moments when I fancy that I shall never see him more."

"Say not so, dear lady," replied her attendant: "I trust my lord will come, and that you may often meet in days far happier than these have been. Long suffering, anxious thoughts, and this suspense, have weakened your spirits, and filled your mind with sad forebodings."

Ines shook her head, and fixing a look, in which there was the most melancholy expression, upon her waiting damsel, she said, I think other. A strong prepossession fills my mind, that some new peril, some deep cause of sorrow, awaits me. I dare not trust the deceiver, Hope. Have you never heard that sometimes before death, or great calamity, the unhappy have had such secret forebodings? They are awful, Ximena, though man cannot fathom their cause. It is as if the soul looked abroad, though imperfectly, into that dim futurity hidden from flesh and blood. I have often thought, a voice that will be heard, a power more than human, that will speak to the heart, gives these suggestions; or, perhaps, the spirits of the dead may hold this secret counsel with that part of our being which is immortal like themselves. I know not what it is, but I think these misgivings of mind have a purpose that deceives not, though it be fearful. Ximena, did you remain in my chamber last night whilst I slept?"

"I stayed by you, lady, till I saw your eye-lids close; you moved not; and as I listened, soft and low breathings told me you slept, then I quitted your side, and left you to repose."

"I slept," said Inez, "but there was no repose in the thoughts that haunted my pillow. A solemn vision stood before me; and though awake now, I see it as perfectly when

I shut my eyes thus, as if it were reality, and still before me."

"What vision, lady?" inquired Ximena with eagerness, whilst every feature became fixed in deep attention, as she listened to hear some extraordinary communication; for, in her day, the designs of Providence were considered, particularly in Portugal, to be made known by the agency of dreams and visions; most gave credit to them, and few, even amongst the bold and hardy, heard them with indifference.

"I thought," continued Ines, "that I was in this convent of Santa Clara; and yet, by that confusion of places and ideas so common in dreams, the convent was in Castile, the land of my birth. As I looked on my children, my mother stood before me, pale, ghastly, like an inhabitant of the tomb, yet in her countenance that expression of benevolence, that marked her features, as I beheld her, before she died: she beckoned me to follow; I essayed to do so, but could never quit my chamber. Anon I heard a bugle sound, and thought it was my lord's, as he was going forth to the woods. When I turned again, my mother was gone. A corpse lay on that spot, where her spectre had passed before my sight. I stooped down to gaze upon it, and methought the features were my own. I endeavoured to cry out, but awoke. As I did so, cold and trembling with horror, I saw—or else my senses were deceived by terror—a shadow pass slowly before my bed. It seemed to pause a moment, and then was seen no more. I rose up, looked around, but all was darkness."

"A fearful vision!" cried Ximena: "yet, lady, may not the anxious thoughts, the late trials you have experienced, suggest these terrific ideas in the wanderings of sleep? Think thus of it; let it not prey on your heart. I will hope it is no other."

"It may be no other," replied Ines, "yet I cannot shake off the melancholy that besets my soul; and thoughts of tender affections, of dearest cares, pass rapidly across my mind. If I die, Ximena, tell my lord that in death he was as dear to me as in that happy hour when he first won the heart of the youthful Ines de Castro. My children, my poor children! you will be careful over them in infancy, and sometimes speak to them of their mother."

"Dearest lady," said Ximena, "I would entreat you to forbear this discourse. Let happier thoughts occupy your mind. Some great change must be the consequence of late events. When Don Pedro shall learn that your marriage is no longer

a secret to the wicked Diego, my lord will be the first to acknowledge you openly as his wife to the king. Let us hope, then, for better times; and think with how much joy the good Don Manuel de Castro will see his daughter hold that place to which her merit and her virtue give her the fairest title, as the wife and the mother of princes."

"My father, my poor father!" said Ines. "Oh that I could see him once again; that I could pour out my secret sorrows in his bosom. Ximena, there are moments when bitter feelings of remorse come over my mind. Had I never done aught without consulting my father's wisdom, and listening to the counsels of his affection, these hours of suffering had been spared me. Yet I thought the time would come, when he would rejoice to see his child the beloved wife of a prince so noble as Don Pedro. I wished to spare him all participation in the knowledge of my marriage, that, if the anger of the king fell heavy upon me, he might not suffer; yet, alas! instead of sparing him, I fear I have but accumulated on him griefs that will bring down his grey hairs in sorrow to the grave. I love, I honour, my father. Could I but see him, I would kneel at his feet, and, avowing all the truth, ask his forgiveness ere I begged his blessing on my marriage."

"How pregnant is anxious thought!" said Ximena. "Lady, in these moments of doubt and suspense, you recall every melancholy theme to give you pain. Think of your father, as in truth he is, a gracious and a favoured nobleman, who cannot but rejoice when he shall learn that fortune has been to his child no blind mistress, but has given her an elevation equal to her desert. You, dear lady, have looked but on the evils of your condition; let me do other; you see but the stormy cloud that throws its shadow over a fair landscape, I will look on the country itself, and think what it will be when sunshine shall succeed the dark hour that obscures it. You have a devoted, a kind lord, and children sweet as the young blossoms of earliest spring; are these no comforts?"

"Comforts!" said Ines: "they are the lifeblood of my heart; more welcome to these eyes than the light of day; and so dear, that to have called them mine is happiness, though I had not another hour to live."

"Horsemen, horsemen! lady," cried Ximena, as she clapped her hands exultingly, and expressed her joy after the manner of her people: "yonder comes my lord!"

"My lord! my husband!" said Ines as she started from her seat, rushed to the window, and looked fixedly on the spot that

led from the forest to the winding ascent of the convent path. Having gazed for several minutes in silence (till those who approached had completely cleared the shadow of the trees and could now be seen in the uninterrupted light), the flush of sudden joy that had overspread the cheek of Ines, like crimson on the cloud of evening, died away, and left it white as death. "It is the king," she said in a low voice, as every nerve in her body trembled at the dreadful apprehension his presence at such a moment occasioned. "Ximena, I am lost!"

"The king!" repeated her attendant, "surely it cannot be."

"I know it is Alonso," said Ines: "he rides the cream-coloured horse given him by Don Pedro. He comes to no good purpose; for oh, Ximena! my fear is quick of eye. Is not yonder man who rides by his side Diego? and, saints of heaven! is not that, too, Gonsalez? What does the coming of such men bode to me?"

Ines sunk down on a seat that stood near the window, as she spoke. Ximena turned to support her, for she looked as if about to lose even the very consciousness of her fears. "Dear lady," said Ximena, greatly distressed, and scarcely knowing what to say to comfort her, for at this instant the faithful girl remembered the vague report that had been told her by the page, of Alonso's displeasure against Ines, "what can I do? shall I call for assistance? shall I summon the abbess? You will not see the king; he will not ask it; you must not meet him."

"I will meet him, Ximena," said Ines in a calmer voice; and, struggling to overcome the effects of this surprise, she added, "Diego comes with him. Is it fitting, think you, that he should be possessed of a knowledge of the truth, whilst I conceal it from Alonso? No, I am the wife of his son, the mother of that son's children, and in his name I will claim the protection of the king as my right. If he has a father's regard for the honour of a son, if he is a man, he dare not withhold it."

"Think what you do, lady," said Ximena, "I fear——"

"I fear not," exclaimed Ines, as she arose, and shewed by the returning firmness of her manner, and the blood that once more crimsoned her cheek, she had recovered from her first shock; "I fear not; I am the wife of Don Pedro, true in faith and in love. My part in him must be respected; what should I fear? Go, Ximena, lose not a moment, bring me Juan and Denis. I will go boldly forth this chamber, and leading my children by the hand, I will kneel at Alonso's feet, and bid him look with pity on the wife and offspring of his son. This shall

be my part! I feel it becomes me; I feel it is due to the love I bear a husband, due to the love of a mother, to the honour of my father. I will meet the king; he shall see that innocence can be fearless in peril."

"But Diego, Gonsalez, they are with him. Think, lady, Alonso would not thus seek you at Coimbra, and in their company, but for some purpose that must be evil. Lady, fly to the church; take refuge at the altar; there you need not fear, since even these men must respect the sanctuary."

I will not fly to it," replied Ines; "the criminal, the guilty, shroud themselves beneath the sanctuary, that guards them from the just terrors of the law. Would you have the wife of Don Pedro like these? Would you have her thus confess herself guilty when her heart tells her she is injured? No, I will meet Alonso. Go, bring hither my children; there is no time for delay; for, hark! even now Alonso demands admittance at the gates. Hear you not the blast of the horn?"

Ximena paused a moment, as the loud summons of the horn rung through the towers of Santa Clara. "That is my summons," said Ines, who seemed to gain courage as the dreaded moment advanced. "I come, king, to answer it. My children, Ximena, my children!"

Ximena obeyed, and passed into the next chamber, where they were playing together at some childish sport, and led into the presence of their mother two lovely boys. The oldest had scarcely numbered five years, his brother was a twelvemonth younger. Ines hardly trusted herself to listen to their infant prattle, lest it should shake that firmness of spirit with which she essayed to meet the king; yet, for a moment, she stooped down, folded them both to her bosom, and imprinting an eager kiss on their ruddy lips, led one in either hand, and bade Ximena open the door of her chamber.

"I descend to the royal apartment," said she to her attendant, "where my husband is wont to give audience when he is at Coimbra. Go forward, Ximena, and say to Alonso, that there Ines de Castro awaits him, and craves to see his Grace alone."

The manner in which this was spoken forbade Ximena to offer any resistance to her lady's purpose; and it occurred to her mind that, perhaps, it was the best course she could adopt, since the faithful maiden thought it was impossible that Alonso could look on her mistress and her children without feeling that kindness and affection so due to both.

At the moment Alonso entered, Donna Ines de Castro stood

at the farthest end of the room, calmly awaiting his arrival. In either hand she still led an infant, whose cherub looks and artless demeanour, reflecting an image of their mother's beauty, were in the highest degree engaging. With dignity in her step, yet with the most affecting simplicity, Ines advanced to meet Alonso, and kneeling at his feet, presented to him her children, as she said, "My king, my father! look on these; and if there is that in them should remind you of their unhappy mother, pardon it for the sake of your own blood that flows in their veins. Bless them, sire, bless them! as the children of your noble son, take them to your bosom; and for their sakes look with pity on her who is the wife, the mother of beings so near yourself:—pardon, pardon!"

Alonso paused, looked on Ines, and then on her children, with a countenance in which there was stern displeasure, yet not unmixed with wonder and surprise at the boldness of her resolution, contrasted as it was by the humility of her manner. "It is too late," said the king: "such a prayer might once have been heard; but when I think on all the injuries you have heaped on me and mine, I may not be moved to listen. You are the author of my son's dishonour,—of his disobedience; and would now——"

"I have not dishonoured the prince," said Ines as she rose up, and stood before the king, whilst a mantling blush of indignation overspread her cheek, and her kindling eye told how deeply she felt being thus charged as the author of Don Pedro's dishonour. "Your son loved me with all the winning constancy of affection. With the unremitting suit of ardent love, he woed and won my soul. Still, O king! fearful of thy displeasure, I denied him the poor hand he sought with so much ardour; till, witnessing his silent sorrow, that pleaded more eloquently than words, I who did resist his importunity, could not resist the sight of his grief—we were wedded; the dispensation of his Holiness first giving sanction to our vows. Since then, I have loved him with all truth as a faithful wife. These innocents have I borne to him; and for his sake would I die rather than live as a cause of offence to one so dear. This is my crime, Alonso;—it merits not the reproach of dishonour."

Alonso was unmoved; and as Ines looked up in the hope to read some trace of a less stern expression in his looks, she shuddered as she beheld the dark frown that knit his brows and the terrific character of his eye, which full, black, and dilated, seemed to flash upon her with withering glances.

"Hast thou not dishonoured me?" he said; and he added, as if recalling every circumstance that could keep up the determination to which he had been wrought by the revengeful Diego and the ruthless Gonsalez, "Was it known to me that, seduced by thy arts, Don Pedro was thy husband, when I pledged the word of a king that he should wed with a daughter of Arragon? But Alonso, forsooth, must be duped, deceived, and by thy means! And what is he now? How does he now stand with a brother king? As one faithless to his engagement, a paltering prince, a common word-breaker! This is thy act, thy doing; as but for the accursed tie that held Pedro to thee, my son would have fulfilled the commands of his father, and preserved his honour to Arragon, pure and spotless as his great name and place demand, in the sight of kings and kingdoms;—and more than this, for even this is thy least crime, didst thou not, to satisfy thy own ambition—that these offsprings of thy blood should hereafter wear our crown—didst thou not—do I speak it, and endure thy sight—give up the noble Ferdinand to the base, infidel Moors?"

"No," said Ines: "it is most false; I never did this. The very men who now led you hither, to condemn an innocent being, they were the traitors who laid in bonds both me and the noble boy."

A scornful laugh burst from the lips of Alonso, as he said, "We know that part of thy tale already. It was to recover the prince, could he have effected it, that Gonsalez followed thy steps. Oh, woman, deceitful woman! seek not by falsehood to cover thy cruel purpose. It was in the hope that Ferdinand would no longer be the stumbling-block to thy ambition, which prompted thee to deliver up the gracious boy to my worst foes. This artifice avails not with me. Speak truth, and repent thee of thy sins."

"Alas!" said Ines, who now trembled at the thought of the danger to which she was exposed by this prepossession of the king, "what avails it that I should speak, since you, sire, give credit to my cruel enemies, but heed not truth when it comes from my lips? I am innocent. As God shall judge between me and them, I am innocent:—what your purpose is, I know not; yet I read it is terrible. Your looks, your speech, all betray it. Tell me, king, what is it you would do? I will learn to bear it; but, oh, have pity on my children!"

"Woman," said Alonso, "though guilt may escape for a time, yet is its condemnation, like that of final doom, certain, however slow. The criminal is cast into a dungeon to await

the sentence of his offence,—our judgment shall be more swift, therefore more merciful, and we are sure to pass it:—confess thy sins to heaven, for not an hour is the date of thy life."

"Mercy! Mercy!" said Ines, sinking on her knees before him; "oh, have mercy upon me! Do not as you are a king, as you are a Christian, do not dip your hands in my innocent blood, and thus commit an act that shall brand your memory with injustice. If you suspect me—give me a fair and open trial. I will not shun it. If I prove guilty, let me die as do the guilty, by the hand of the law; but, oh, commit not an act of murder."

"I will not hear this," said Alonso. "Let go my robe. You know your sentence: it is one of justice, not of wrath. I will not hear you."

"You shall hear me," cried Ines. "I plead for life; and that will give me words to move your heart, though it were stubborn as the flinty rock. Think of my youth: to be thus cut off in the fulness of life and being, in the strength of my years, without so much of grace being given to me as to allow me time to repent of those deep sins I have committed against God in heaven. Think too, of your son, your only son. How will you bear his grief, when he shall ask from you his unhappy wife, whilst you point but to her mangled corpse, with the very hand that has done the deed? Alonso, if thou hast the heart of a father, how wilt thou bear a son's curse;—a son who should ask a blessing of his father, to see him rise and curse him as the murderer of his wife?"

"Or shall I not rather shew him Ferdinand," said Alonso, "saved from thy ruthless ambition, thou step-mother in heart as well as name?"

"I never harmed the boy," said Ines, "so help me holy saints of heaven! I loved and would have cherished him as my own. Look on these children, who, too young to know, too infantine in mind to understand, their grandsire's cruel purpose to their mother, stand silent, awe-struck before thee, yet weeping for sympathy. See! they kneel and raise their innocent hands and asking eye to thee, yet know not what to ask—their looks—their innocence—plead for mercy. Hast thou a soul so cold, so hardened, to resist them? Alonso, thou wilt not take my life?"

"I have sworn it, woman," replied the king, as he cast his eyes upon the ground, and spoke in a steady, determined, yet calm voice; "I have sworn that thou shalt die."

"Oh, break the oath!" said Ines: "the sin is great, yet to

shed blood were greater. Nay, to break it will not be sin; for angels and spirits of a higher world, who look on this, and carry up to God the register of all men's acts below, they shall record before the throne of heaven itself this sin as virtue, for it spares the innocent. Alonso, shew thyself a king in act as well as power; and in the magnitude of thy great spirit pardon a wretched woman, who has no defence, save in thy own mercy."

"Peace, peace," said Alonso: "I must not hear you; I shall forget I am a man."

"Oh, you will prove that you are more than man, for mercy is of higher mould," exclaimed Ines: "man follows the impulse of his own fallen nature if he gives way to passion; but when pity moves the soul to spare, then does he rise above himself, and emulates the attributes of heaven; then is he like to God. Hard-hearted, relentless, what is he but a son who bears not the image of his Father? for God will remove the impress of himself from that being who has no mercy. Thou wilt not kill me?"

Alonso turned aside his head, and waved his hand as if to chide back the unhappy woman, who drew nearer to him, till at last she ventured to place her hand on his. "Life," continued Ines, "is dear to all; for who so strong in suffering, who so resolute to bear, who so confident in innocence, that he would wish to rush before his Maker till He shall call him? Alonso, I will plead to thee for thy own sake. Hast thou no regard for thy own repose; thy rest by day, thy quiet in the night? Hast thou not a conscience? and will that slumber think you, whilst my blood shall cry from the very earth, The king's hand shed it! Thou wilt fear thy conscience."

Alonso appeared greatly moved. He turned towards Ines; and there was that expression in his countenance which spoke the struggles of his mind.

The unhappy lady observed this, and hailed it as an omen of mercy. Desirous to complete the favourable impression she hoped she had made on his feelings, she thus continued: "Yes, I will tell thee, that though thy conscience may now sleep, yet shall it one day awaken, never more to rest. Oh! trifle not with such a power. To the good, it is like the rest of infancy, calm and sweet; to the bad, it is as a fire that burns for ever, yet without consuming that which feeds the flame. Oh! canst thou Alonso, cease to feel a power like this? Poor, helpless, trembling at your feet, I sue for life. If for one so desolate thou hast no pity, yet for thy own sake respect thy conscience; bid it not condemn thee."

"Rise, lady, rise," said Alonso; "by the rood! thy prayers have in them a power stronger than that of wrath."

"They have the force of truth. Who may resist it?" said Ines. "Oh, Alonso, look on this boy:" she lifted up her eldest son in her arms as she spoke, and presented him to the king: "Look in his face. Dost thou see nothing there that may remind thee of his father—of thyself? He has his mother's eyes; so have I heard it said by one dear to thee and me. Those eyes drop tears. Let them move thee to pity; and the day will come when this child shall learn to bless thee for it. He can already lisp his prayers; and in those orisons of innocence have I taught him to name thee, to pray for Alonso's life, and canst thou destroy his mother?"

Alonso took the child from her arms, kissed the boy, and passing his hand over a head of clustering curls, said, "I will think of thy prayer. Go, lady; retire, retire to thy chamber. Promise me not to quit it. I cannot harm thee whilst these innocents look in my face. Go to thy chamber. Yet stir not from it. I command obedience."

"I will not disobey thee, sire," replied Ines; "for thou art father of him to whom I owe all obedience. Thou, too, art my king; and may be the ready compliance I shew to thy commands may prove me not unworthy kinder thoughts. Thou wilt be merciful; I know thou wilt. In thy mercy will I trust; for thou wilt have no power given thee to harm me, if God but touch thy heart with pity."

Alonso waved his hand, as Ines, leading her children from his presence, retired once more to the solitude of her own chamber.

From the manner in which the king quitted Ines de Castro, it cannot be doubted that his purpose was shaken. It needed but calm reflection; it needed but that some friend to truth should have stept in, and supported him in his better feelings, to gain a complete victory over his passions. Had Beatrice or Azevedo been near him; nay, had he but been left to himself in these moments of returning mercy, all had been well. But his evil genius was lord of the ascendant; for, as he crossed the gallery to retire to his own apartment, after the painful interview we have attempted to describe, Gonsalez, who was on the watch, encountered him; and, under an appearance of duty, followed Alonso with pertinacious resolution. Long were they in secret conference together. What then passed must be matter of conjecture, as nothing certain was ever known. However, thus much we may state with truth, that

Gonsalez felt that now the hour was come when Ines or himself must fall. It is needless to add he did not even pause in choosing who should become the victim.

Alonso, sufficiently irritated against Ines de Castro, had already listened to whatver falsehoods had been instilled into his mind, to make her appear artful as well as guilty; but well did Gonsalez know that representations such as these would avail nothing with Don Pedro, who, from late circumstances, was very likely to regain the confidence of the king. Should Ines, therefore, but once gain opportunity to state to the prince her husband, the wrongs which she, as well as Ferdinand, had suffered from Diego and himself, they were both lost men. Can it then be doubted, that driven to save all, or lose all, by one bold act of villany, Gonsalez would now use every argument once more to sharpen and confirm the almost "blunted purpose" of the king? Alonso's violent passions, his deep resentments and fears, lest, sooner or later, Ferdinand would be got rid of to make room for the offspring of an ambitious step-mother (for so he considered Ines's children in the succession), were all feelings which one so artful as Gonsalez knew how to turn to account. Whatever were the arguments used by this wicked counsellor with the king, no doubt they were powerful, as, contrary to his own intentions, he forbore communicating again with the unhappy lady, who, with such ready obedience, had retired to her chamber at his command. Thither must we now follow her.

Ines de Castro, though alarmed by the manner in which Alonso had declared his cruel purpose, nevertheless would not suffer herself to suspect the fearful extent to which his passions were capable of leading him when they were once roused: so that even now she fancied he had not really meditated her death. He might have intended to prove her fortitude, the constancy of her affection, or how far she was willing to submit herself to him; and this hope arose almost to conviction, when she recollected the calm and softened tone in which he had left her, and the kiss, too, he had imprinted on the lips of her child; she thought that could not come from a heart capable of such fierce resentment. These thoughts re-assured her; and with that sudden transition from fear to hope, a powerful property in minds quick and imaginative, she no longer dreaded Alonso, and fancied it needed but the arrival of Don Pedro, for that beloved husband completely to reconcile his father to their marriage.

One circumstance gave her some uneasiness, it was that

Ximena did not come to attend on her. She had no doubt her faithful servant had been forbidden to approach her; yet why this should be so was to her unaccountable. In vain did she endeavour to guess the cause. Restless and uneasy, still she determined to shew the most perfect submission to the king, and not to quit that chamber he had assigned to her as a prison, till such should be his command. Yet was there that in her chamber capable of softening the hours of captivity and sorrow; since it contained her children, who followed her thither after the interview with the king.

With all the care and fondness of a mother did she now place the innocent beings in her own bed, as it drew towards night. This done, she mingled tears with the caresses she bestowed upon them; and with a mother's blessing left them to repose. In a recess of the chamber, there stood a small oratory. To this she bent her steps, fell on her knees before the emblem of her faith, and long and fervently poured out her soul in prayer. Calmed, and in some measure re-assured, by these orisons, she threw herself upon a couch that was in the chamber, and endeavoured to recover that strength of mind and body which had been so fearfully shaken by long and anxious cares. She still hoped, though she hardly dared expect it, that it was possible her beloved husband might arrive at Santa Clara before the convent gates were closed for the night.

In this state of mind, full of anxious hopes and fears, yet trusting to that power she had so fervently invoked, Ines stretched herself upon the couch, listening to the least sound that might convey intelligence so dear to her heart, so long and ardently expected, till, wearied by conflicting feelings, and the vicissitudes she had suffered during the day, she at length sunk into sleep. Some power, merciful and benignant, or conscious innocence, perhaps, now afforded the unhappy Ines a brief respite from the cruel destiny which had hitherto followed her with unrelenting steps.

CHAPTER XXXII.

O villains, vipers, damned without redemption.
SHAKSPEARE.

THE day had been unusually calm and sultry, and towards evening the gloominess which had obscured the sun ever since its rising became yet more apparent, and a few clouds, black as midnight, were edged with what far more resembled the colour of blood than that beautiful crimson glow which is generally seen as an accompaniment to the sunset of a warm climate. Still there was not a breath of air stirring. Every plant drooped its head, and the boughs and leaves of the tall forest trees stood so fixed and still as if they were chained to inaction by the wand of an enchanter. Yet, in the midst of this total absence of all agitation of the air, might be observed a phenomenon of nature that always excited alarm in a country that had already more than once experienced what it boded;—this was the appearance of the river, which, usually so calm and tranquil, was now seen disturbed as if agitated by the highest winds. It was covered with bubbles, and heaved and swelled above its banks.

Amongst the broken crags of the mountain sides there was also seen to play light flames of fire, not unlike the kindling of charcoal; yet when any one was hardy enough to approach the spot whence they issued, nothing in the shape of combustion could be found; the rocks were, as they had ever stood, presenting their dark fronts to the successive storms and sunshine of ages. Gradually the very few clouds that could be seen rolled heavily onward, collected themselves together, and then remained stationary, suspended in part above the mountains, but entirely overshadowing the deep valley that separated them. These clouds were dense and black; but the whole expanse of air changed to a dull and reddish hue, like a slow but glowing furnace. The atmosphere, already thick and oppressive, was now strongly impregnated with a sickening and sulphureous smell, that affected many persons with giddiness, and others with that stupor which sinks them into

a deep but feverish sleep, when the mind, affected by physical causes, becomes restless and perturbed, alive but to visions of horror. The valley was in deep shadow beneath the clouds which hung heavily above it; but the lofty summit and towers of Santa Clara, reflecting the colour of the sky, were seen fiery and red, like a stately palace of Pandemonium.

The awful silence that reigned was alone broken by the lowing of cattle, and the screams of the birds that make their nests in the rocks, as, driven by some strong instinct from their covert, they rose on restless wings and wheeled among the clouds, as if they sought refuge from some convulsion that threatened to disturb the great laws of nature.

Whilst all without shewed these fearful portents towards the approach of night, it was within a chamber of the convent that Diego and Gonsalez, closeted in long and stern debate together, were suddenly startled by the opening of a door.

"Who comes there?" said the latter, as he rose up with haste.

"It is I," said a voice softly; and the sharp, thin, pale, and haggard features of the ruffian Arias Coello were seen to look in at the door, as a lamp he carried in his hand added to their sinister expression the powerful markings of strong light and shadow. "I thought you would need the lamp," continued the taxman, "for it is nearly dark; and this is not a night when a man would desire darkness. Do I come too soon?"

"No, no, replied Gonsalez: you are welcome, whenever it may be—for the rest we wait but——"

"Did ye hear, sirs," said Arias interrupting him eagerly, "did ye hear that awful stroke, but half an hour since? How the bell sounded! It struck but once, yet it had a tongue as if it told us all what to expect and how to prepare for it."

"What mean you? inquired Diego: "we heard no bell."

"You must have been in earnest debate, then," replied Coello. "The bell of the chapel struck once, loud, deep, and full; yet no earthly hand touched the cord to give it tongue. The whole convent is alarmed; and, as I came hither, they were assembling to prayer in the chapel, much moved by such a supernatural summons from the mouth of the old tower."

"It is a thing might move firmer nerves than those found beneath cowl and hood," said Gonsalez; "for know you not, Arias Coello, that wise men and learned clerks tell us, there is a property of nature, or of the air, I know not what they call it, that will oft make metals speak, and bells sound, without a

hand to touch them, before an earthquake? The old world will shake to-night. or yonder blood-red sky tells not truth, and the howling dogs and screaming eagles belie their prescience in philosophy."

"Mother of heaven guard us!" said the pious Arias; "I had forgot. Yes, I have heard the wonder you now tell of respecting metals, and especially bells hung in high towers." As he spoke, Arias looked terrified; for at the date of our tale it was believed, true as Holy Writ, that a coming earthquake, however powerful or slight would be the shock, constantly announced its visitation by tolling the bells with an invisible hand; and before that fearful one which shook a great part of Portugal during the fourteenth century, the monks have recorded that not a bell was mute.

"Let us all to prayer," said Coello, as he now advanced into the centre of the chamber, for hitherto he had stood talking near the door. "Alack, Don Diego, how you look! and you, Gonsalez, have a brow that shews of recent disturbance of the inward man."

These observations of Arias Coello were not unfounded; for some purpose of deep import had formed a subject of fearful debate between those friends in guilty and secret counsel. Yet there was a striking contrast in the expression of countenance, as well as in the demeanour of either. Gonsalez, a large and powerful man, strode slowly up and down the chamber with a noiseless step, that had in its silence and its stalk something terrific, so little did the giant form and weight thus seen gliding along accord with the quiet of its demeanour. His eye, large and piercing, was, in the white that surrounded the pupil, shot with blood, and looked not unlike those irregular lines in a map which mark the course of rivers. His nostrils expanded as he drew deeply his breath, and his mouth (a feature in the human face that ever indicates the disposition of the individual) had in it that close set compression of the lips, together with hard muscular lines down the sides of the cheek, that spoke the ruthless villain.

Diego had nothing calm in his manner. His step was quick and uncertain. At one moment he was seated, at the next pacing to the window, or standing, abstractedly, his fingers playing with the clasp that fastened his cloak; whilst his upreared hair, which strayed in disorder about his head, left bare a brow reeking with moisture, as much from the agitation of his mind, as from the effects of the sultry and oppressive air he breathed. There was, too, a more than ordinary expression

of wildness and irresolution in his wan and faded looks. Some internal conflict, known but to the Searcher of all hearts, shook his very soul with its terrors. It might be the last combat held between a wicked spirit and that bold but sinking adversary—Conscience. Or it might be the war of a struggling passion, that will sometimes imitate the power of a better feeling than its own. Whatever it was, there were moments when its efforts were apparent, and then would come a change of a less perturbed nature, yet engrossing; for Diego would then stand with folded arms, his eyes fixed on vacancy, seeing no world but that raised by his own imagination; for he seemed so abstracted as to be totally insensible to external things.

At length Gonsalez broke the silence which, for a few minutes, had succeeded Coello's proposal of prayers; a proposal probably not even heard by those to whom it was addressed, as it was unanswered. "Where is the king?" he inquired of the taxman.

"In the chamber of audience, and alone," was the reply.

"Good," said Gonsalez:—he paused; then continued, "And where is the Moorish maiden, Ximena?"

"Forbidden by order of the king to leave the apartment which she inhabits, over the gateway," replied Arias.

"A necessary precaution," answered Gonsalez; "and lastly, where is the lady?—or the criminal, for that must now be her name."

Diego rose and recommenced his unsteady walk, as this question was put to Coello.

"In her chamber with her children," said the taxman.

"With her children!" cried Diego, in a tone that expressed horror.

"With the children of her beloved husband, Don Pedro, thy successful rival, and most princely adversary of blows and buffets," said Gonsalez, in a quick, cold, and sarcastic tone, as he turned short on Diego, and fixed his eye upon him. "Wilt thou, Diego, stand sponsor to the next pledge thy light-of-love brings her lord, should they once more live together in nuptial harmony?"

"Peace!" said Diego; "this is no hour for biting jests," and he slunk back into the gloomiest part of the chamber to hide feelings of mortified pride and resentment that rose in a purple torrent to darken his pale cheek.

"And now, Coello," said Gonsalez, "where art thou?"

"Where am I?" replied Coello, "why here, Gonsalez, standing before you. You are pleasant to-night."

"Oh, most wondrous pleasant," said Gonsalez; "and that thou shalt witness ere another hour be past. But when I demanded of thee, Coello, where thou wert, I meant not thy bodily presence, but where thou art in spirit and in purpose. I would know if to-night thy thoughts are bent on mass-singing priests, with thy hypocritical devotion, thy shriveled cheek, and bent body, that looks like the withered remains of St. Francis under his shrine of glass."

"Thou art a bold man to talk thus of holy saints and their relics, when we stand in such jeopardy; and who knows but if, ere morning, we may not all be swallowed up alive? Think of these fearful signs, think of the bell!"

"I do think of it, and hail it," said Gonsalez. "It is the best bell that has rung this many a day from yonder old tower, since it will call off to the chapel every soul in the convent that wears veil and cowl, just at the time I would have no more eyes and ears within this part of the building than are under the authority of the king, and dare not use them to question it."

"Alack!" said Coello, "it is well we are beneath a roof so sacred, in this time of peril; for I doubt not the holy cross of Coimbra will support the rock in whose chapel it stands, though all the city and valley should sink in the convulsion. Yet who knows, should we have a great shock, even those who are become as the spouse of the church——"

"May go down alive into hell, thou wouldst say, like Korah and his company of wicked priests, as the earth yawned to receive them," cried Gonsalez. "Thou seest, Coello, I am godly enough, like thee, to quote from Holy Writ; and many a good example can I find in it: for you know the story of Jezebel, who, when she became an enemy to a certain king, was slain and cast down to the dogs."

"It was an act of righteous judgment," said Coello, "and many a judgment demands the shedding of blood."

"I am glad to hear thee, Arias, so pious and right-minded to-night," replied Gonsalez; "for this was the very theme on which I would question thy spirit. Thy father was a butcher of Lamego, or men belie thy origin, Coello. I am glad his son has not forgot some relish for the craft."

"My birth is no reproach," said Arias, "for I am not the first man who, by the blessing of his patron saint, and fair opportunity, has arisen from an obscure station to one of high degree; and by thy means, Gonsalez, I look to rise still higher, or I would not go forward with you in this matter."

"Thou shalt rise like a saint, till thy very bones are canonized," answered Gonsalez, "so thou art true, and flinch not from thy ancient vocation this night. Don Diego here has not thy nerve, nor thy quality, to consider acts of justice as judgments from heaven. I were loth to trust his arm in this matter. Coello, thou hast played many parts in thy life, and to-night thou must enact one not unsuited to the craft in which thou wert trained. Coello, didst thou ever strike a lamb, or a foolish bleating sheep, when thy father lived by the axe and steel, as an executioner of dumb animals?"

"I—I kill!" said Coello, "I could not do it: so tender is my heart that I could not wring the neck even of a feathered fowl."

"Then I fear I must look elsewhere for a deputy."

"Nay," said Coello, "I meant, I did not say, that is, I would obey thy will in this, if——"

"O sir, not my will, please you," answered Gonsalez with much sharpness, "the king's will,—the king directs this, not the simple nobleman Alvaro Gonsalez. If the king commands, he must obey; but Alonso is accountable for the fact. So must the world be told, when this thing shall be known."

"Let the world be told it then," said Diego, who had stood, nearly all the time that Gonsalez and Coello had discoursed together, in one of those fits of abstraction which had marked his conduct throughout the day; "but let us not palter between ourselves. I have wrongs, deep and indelible wrongs, that can only be effaced by a sacrifice that shall suffice even my resentments, and give to the heart of Don Pedro, the happy Pedro, agonies such as he has heaped on me for seven long years. Revenge, my absolute and full revenge, spares not—even myself, when it strikes. I can be rigid, ruthless, as Gonsalez, when my own insulted honour and my own will demands it. This is my motive; thine is less noble."

"It may be as thou sayest," replied Gonsalez; "but I see not that it therefore is less necessary to impress upon the mind of Coello that what he must do is under the sanction of the king's authority."

"Thou art king to-night, Gonsalez," said Diego; "for thou hast ruled the king, and stirred up the embers of his slumbering passions into a fearful flame that will destroy ere it expires. For Coello there, he knows his own motive, and looks to thee for its reward."

"He must first deserve it ere he gains it. Coello, thou hast a dagger or a knife about thee. Has it passed over the whet-

stone? A butcher's son should know how to sharpen steel, that the blow may be swift and sure. That is mercy, Coello, and mercy is your saint's virtue; thou wouldst not neglect to imitate it; and even I would spare all struggling, all unnecessary pain. Draw thy dagger. I would try its point."

Coello, with a trembling hand, drew the dagger from its scabbard. "Did I not tell thee," said he, "that I am too weak-hearted for these things? If my hand shakes thus now, what will it do when——"

He paused. Gonsalez took the dagger, surveyed it with calmness, and looked Coello in the face, as he finished the sentence the taxman had left imperfect, by saying, "When thou dost bury this blade in the heart of Ines de Castro."

A slight convulsion seemed to pass over the countenance of Diego at the hearing of these words, yet he spoke not.

Arias exclaimed, "I could not do it; for worlds I could not do it."

"Remember," said Gonsalez in a stern voice, as he dwelt on every syllable that made up the word: "remember! The king's authority——"

"Shall have no force with me to make me shed the blood of a Christian woman," answered Coello.

"How, villain! hypocrite!" cried Gonsalez, as his utterance became vehement with passion; "thou wilt not dare betray us!"

"Betray ye! no," answered the taxman; "I have no mind to play so dishonest a part. Keep good terms with me. I said I would not shed blood with my own hand; but I did not say that I would not help in the matter, in the judgment of the king on the guilty."

"Oh, a quibble of conscience!" cried Gonsalez, as a savage laugh, that rung fearfully through the vaulted room, burst from his lips. "Well, be it so; so long as thou art present, thou art a sharer in the deed."

"Thou wilt need light," said Coello; "there will be charity in a sure blow, and that may not be given in the dark. I will hold and bear the lamp while it is done," added the wretch, as he drew his head close to Gonsalez, spoke in a low whisper, and looked at this moment like what might be fancied the bodily appearance of the damned when risen to judgment—an image of sin and horror.

Gonsalez paused ere he replied. A gleam of satisfaction passed over his swart features, as, looking full in Coello's face, he said, "It shall be as thou hast said. And this hand," he

continued, extending the dagger, "this hand, that has struck down many a man, why should it not be firm when it deals with so frail a thing as——" he stopt, then added:—"But where Coello, didst thou get this steel? It is rich in the hilt, the blade finely tempered—better than my own. I never saw a prettier bauble, yet a good one."

"The king gave it me," replied Coello, "when I was first appointed taxman over the Moors. See you not that inlaid upon the hilt, it hath the royal devise of the eagle, and the motto, *My hopes fly high?*"

"It is well," said Gonsalez: "a royal instrument is fitting to execute a royal command. Follow me. Diego, will you go on before, or shall I lead the way?"

Diego, who, during the latter part of this brutal discourse had sate mute as death, and with the look of one who seems in a stupor more than a state of consciousness, arose as the last words caught his ear; yet still was he so confused, that, after he had arisen, he gazed about him, and on Gonsalez, as if he scarcely understood for what purpose he was summoned. Gonsalez saw his dreadful state of irresolution, went up to him, and exerting that irresistible ascendency which a powerful and daring character can call forth at command, to make the weak villain crouch before him, spoke but a few words in a voice so low that they were not heard by Coello, who had reached the door, and had his hand upon the latch.

Diego's timidity, or irresolution, whatever it might be, sunk into submission as he stood before the man, who, even in these moments, could awe as well as subdue him. Indeed, there was that about Gonsalez, which could so mingle in its expression contempt for weakness, as he termed it, with the example of his own bold and reckless spirit, that shamed as well as conquered minds less resolute than his. Diego spoke not in reply, but motioning his monitor to go on, endeavoured to assume a more calm demeanour, and, without a change of countenance, moved forward with a slow and solemn step, like the criminal who follows his executioner to the scaffold.

Coello led the way, bearing the lamp, which he shaded with his hand; and, with a stealthy step, did all three ascend a flight of stairs that led to an upper chamber. Most cautiously did they proceed into it, closed the entry through which they passed, secured the bolt; and Gonsalez pointed with his hand to a second door that communicated with the sleeping apartment of Ines de Castro.

"Which way shall we return?" whispered Coello, in a low

voice. "There is, I know, by sure information, another door within her room, that leads down to the court, the court where the chapel stands, we had better go that way when all is over, for fear——"

"Peace, peace," said Gonsalez; "Diego, will you pass in?" Diego waved his hand.

"No," said Gonsalez; "thou wilt remain here, then, and keep watch. Well, it may be better you should do so. Coello, forward, open softly yon chamber door."

Not a word more was spoken, lest the least sound should disturb those within. Diego stood fixed to the spot, the image of horror; yet there was no relenting purpose in his soul. Gonsalez was firm, cool, and collected. He held the dagger grasped in his right hand, with the other he motioned Coello once more to go on. The taxman again shaded the lamp; and all its light settling on his own countenance, shewed the haggard, yet ferocious expression of a man capable of witnessing murder. He stole into the chamber, as did the fiend into Paradise, to bring evil, sin, and death, where beauty and innocence found their place of repose.

Though the lamp was darkened by his hand, on coming to the foot of the bed, Coello raised it, and looked upon the sleeping children. The night was sultry, they had thrown off the clothes, leaving bare their limbs, as the two innocent beings lay twined in each other's arms. Their senses were fast locked in sleep, their cheeks red as the sweetest blossom of the rose, their skin so soft and white, with their little hands dimpled in the beauty of infancy, all presented an image of such perfect loveliness, yet so helpless, so endearing, that even Coello turned aside the lamp, as if fearful to trust himself to contemplate a sight that was likely to awaken feelings of tenderness within him.

As he turned away his head, the rays of the lamp fell on the couch that stood near the bed. Coello shuddered. His flesh seemed to crawl upon his bones as he caught the first sight of the unhappy mother of the children. She was sleeping. It was what he had desired; yet now, in spite of himself, he repined to witness the unconscious security of her repose at such a moment. The innocent victim lay wrapped in her long white veil upon the couch. Her cheek was pale, and traces of sorrow and anxiety might yet be seen on her mild and beautiful features. Her hair hung loose about her neck; and there were a few bright drops upon her cheek, that shewed she had wept even in her sleep. One arm was by her side, the other partly

extended beyond the couch; the hand was open: no sculptor could have chiseled finer proportions than that hand and arm displayed.

As Coello looked upon Ines, so still, so beautiful and placid, that, but for the soft low breathings which came upon his ear, he could almost have fancied he beheld an image of marble, a master-piece of art. The thought, too, how soon she would be no better than a thing so cold and inanimate, forced itself on his mind, but could not awaken his remorse.

Even Gonsalez lingered a moment, and looked upon her; for there is in beauty and in the helplessness of sleep, a charm that will be felt even by minds least alive to images of excellence or pity. And Coello, cold, selfish, hardened as he was, could not but acknowledge, as he contemplated the loveliness of the being before him, that it was a pity it was doomed so soon to pass away, so soon to fall, like a withered and broken flower, to be no more than dust. "Yet," he thought, "death is but like sleep, and the dead and the sleeper are the same." Comforted by this poor attempt to revive his sinking courage to witness a deed so wicked, he glided up once more to the side of Gonsalez, who stood bending over the sleeping victim's couch.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Hark! what low sound from yonder rock! the air
Trembles with horror; fainting lightnings glare:
Shrill crows the cock, the dogs give dismal yell;
And with the whirlwind's roar full comes the swell;
Convulsive staggers rock th' eternal ground.

MICKLE.

THE inconstancy of the human mind has ever been a theme of moral speculation with the philosopher, yet no remedy has been known to fix the wavering thoughts of man, to control the restless nature of his passions, save that which is found in religion. No other principle is permanent, no other law binding; since change of feeling, of circumstance, of place, and of society, alike act on the mind, and produce those various and contradictory movements that make one who is to-day a wise man to-morrow seem as a fool, and often sink the good into the bad, the hero into the tyrant.

These remarks may in particular be applied to Alonso the Brave, who, though not devoid of the superstitions that characterised the age in which he lived, yet had never known or felt the influence of true religion, as a principle of action that could alone have sustained him when the rude assaults of his ungoverned passions burst the boundary of reason and carried all before them; like a vessel which, having no anchor to secure her moorings, is drifted before the first tempest that assails her, and often strikes on sands or rocks. In Alonso, there was nothing cold or calculating; but, like all kings who act from the impulse of the present moment, his power, though it was sometimes an instrument of greatness, was oftener one of destruction; so much easier is it, in all stations of life, to find the means to do ill than the opportunity to do good. Surrounded, too, as he was, by men who could watch the current of his passions with the penetrating eye of self-interest to turn them to account, he was often placed in the situation of an inflamed adversary, who loses his ground or receives a fall; not that he has less power or less skill to cope with his opponent, but because the intemperance of his feelings makes

him no match for one who plays his part with hand, eye, and resolution, under the perfect command of a cool self-possession.

By such means had Alonso become what he was at this moment—a cruel, vindictive, and blood-thirsty tyrant; yet not so hardened as Gonsalez, that he could be calm and composed under the dictates of his own passions. The sea is a destroyer when it rises into a tempest, yet it rages and swells within itself; so was it now with the mind of Alonso. To use the words of our great poet, he had "bound up each corporal agent to this terrible purpose;" and when such was the case, seldom, if ever, did he flinch from it.

It may seem strange that both the king and his accomplices could witness unshaken the terrific signs in heaven and earth, that threatened the inhabitants of the latter with one of those calamities that may be numbered amongst the greatest of human suffering—an earthquake. Yet, in such an hour, to go forward in their purpose seems scarcely possible, were it not known to those who are acquainted with the records of various ages and countries, under similar terrific circumstances (and not without wonder as well as horror can it be read or told), that such times have ever been marked and noted for the commission of fearful crimes. The vindictive wretch who expects the ground to open and swallow him up alive has been known to choose such an hour as favourable to private revenge and deadly malice; so that sometimes the assassin and the victim have found one grave in the vast and gaping womb of their mother earth.

We do not attempt to describe the conflict that agitated the bosom of the king. He who has seen the deadly effects of ungoverned passion will know that in the strength of its impulse it controls all other feelings. Even physical causes contribute to its fury: the effects thus produced may be compared to the morbid affections of disease, which turns even nutriment into poison. Even so did natural causes at this moment but inflame the agitation of Alonso's mind. The state of the air, its dense and sulphureous oppression, in some was known to produce giddiness, stupor, or sickness; in others it had a contrary effect, especially where there was a predisposing cause, and would act on the brain with a feverish irritation allied to madness.

So might it have been with Alonso, as flushed, labouring to breathe freely, with a wildness in his looks and a restlessness of manner, he remained alone, pondering on a purpose that he longed, yet dreaded, to find accomplished. Whilst thus

musing, the deep silence of the hour was suddenly broken by the blast of a horn without the gates. Alonso started—it was repeated. A shudder came over him, yet he knew not wherefore. So alive is guilt to fear, that, though a king, and all-powerful as he was, he felt as if that blast was a summons to his own soul, to answer for what he had commanded to be done. No statue was ever more fixed than was Alonso, as he stood listening for the least noise that might convey intelligence.

He heard steps advancing in a hurried manner: the door opened without ceremony or respect of place, to usher in those who advanced. But what tongue shall speak the emotions of the king, when the Talba, the noble-minded Talba, rushed into his presence, and with a generosity of feeling that made the dark brow of the Moor shine like an angel of light, presented to Alonso the young and lost Prince Ferdinand.

Don Pedro followed, threw himself at the king's feet, and exclaimed, "My father, receive your beloved grandchild, the heir and promise of your royal house. This generous Moor, who was so late our foe, has restored him safe to our arms. By what means he gained intelligence of the place where the boy was imprisoned I have not yet learnt, for we encountered each other but this hour, in the road to Santa Clara; and when I saw my enemy, the guardian, the conductor of my son to liberty, a father's feelings taught me to view him as a friend. I frankly offered to the Moor that peace should sheath our swords, and that these unhappy feuds that drench the land with blood should cease. Oh, my father, let not peace end here—let it close the private feud as well as the public warfare. Forgive me the wrong I have done your royal authority, both as a son and a subject. Never will I rise from the earth till your pardon of my wife—for Ines de Castro is my most dear wife—shall mark with what fulness of joy you hail the hour that restores Ferdinand to your bosom. As a father, feel for us; as a king, be gracious, and forgive us all the past."

The extreme distraction of the king's mind for a moment kept him silent. Don Pedro imputed it to the suddenness of joy and surprise, at the recovery of his grandson, so late a captive.

The Talba spoke: "King," said he, "I have fulfilled my word to thee; to-morrow thou wilt restore Hamet to his widowed mother's bosom?"

Alonso bowed assent: he was about to speak; but the Talba

continued, "I will not now disturb feelings so sacred by a full detail of what has chanced; but thus much I may not delay to tell thee:—On the night you bade me never more return into your presence till Ferdinand was restored, as I glided through the hall to leave it, as you commanded, with secresy and in silence, I heard some words dropt by Don Alvaro Gonsalez and Don Diego, who were in earnest conference together with the taxman. These few words told me where Ferdinand was imprisoned; that it had been by the connivance of these men, who even then meditated to urge your Grace to the commission of a dreadful crime, which nothing, I learnt, could prevent, but the recovery of the young prince. I lost not an instant: the cause I served gave wings to my purpose. Allah be praised, I found this youthful prince safe in life and limb, restored to me by Aza and the brave Moors, who instantly yielded him to my desire. To-day I carried him to the castle of St. Iago: you were gone; but your queen, the noble Beatrice, bade me, as I valued the life of an innocent being, to lose not a moment in bringing Prince Ferdinand to you at Santa Clara."

A cry of horror burst from Alonso's lips. Regardless of all else, he summoned an officer, who waited without, on the instant; and turning to the Talba, clasped his hands together in agony, as he said, "Follow yonder man. Conduct the Moor to the chamber of Ines de Castro. Go, fly! and save life ere it be too late."

Don Pedro caught these words of his father: he had received the warning letter from the bishop not more than an hour after Cassim (who, as being a Moor, had been detained, and could at last with extreme difficulty gain access to the prince) had delivered into his hands that letter from Ines, in which she implored him to come instantly to Coimbra. Fearing, therefore, something fatal, he lost not a moment, but set out attended only by Cassim and a trusty page. And now, when he caught those few words of the king which intimated the danger in which Ines stood, the warning of the bishop's letter came to his mind with horrible conviction of its truth. He sprang from the ground, rushed to the door,—the Talba drew his dagger and followed. But, oh! what were their feelings, when, as the door opened, a shrill piercing cry came on the ear of all.

"Great God! it is done!" exclaimed Alonso, as he dropt into a seat nearly deprived of sense and motion.

Don Pedro, and the Talba, neither spoke nor paused, but,

scarcely touching the ground over which they passed, followed the officer, who guided them to the fatal chamber.

Alonso remained in a state that could neither be called that of life or death. He was stupified at the thoughts of the crime he had consummated on a being now proved so innocent beyond even his suspicions. His grandson, Prince Ferdinand, in pity to his distress, remained with him. Sounds, as of tumult, were soon heard; and Alonso, struggling to find so much breath as was necessary to make his orders known, bade Ferdinand learn the cause of this disturbance. He summoned an attendant to do so without delay.

The king learned that this last disturbance was occasioned by the priests, who, having been assembled in the chapel at prayer from the alarm of the bell mentioned by Coello, had now closed their chapel gates even against Don Pedro; as, to add to the horror of the scene, the murderers, on being pursued by the injured husband and the Talba, suddenly rushed into the holy place and took sanctuary at the altar. In vain did the frantic Don Pedro and the gallant Moor attempt to burst those gates of oak and iron which kept them from doing instant justice on the villains for whose blood they thirsted in requital of slaughtered innocence. Alonso groaned as he heard this; for it assured him, not only was the crime committed past all human aid, but the murderers had escaped, and were protected by the inviolable laws of a sanctuary so proud and so sacred as that of Coimbra.

A scene followed that no tongue can describe; feeble, therefore, would be our attempt to paint it. Distracted by the murder of his beloved wife, whose body lay stained with her own blood, as her helpless children, who had been awakened by her cries, were weeping and terrified at the sight; disappointed, too, in the instant revenge which he had determined to wreak on the villains; Don Pedro rushed back to the chamber where he had left the king who could sanction a deed so cruel.

Horror was in his looks, madness in his brain, as the wretched son, forgetful of nature's sacred tie, rushed forward, holding in his hand the dagger (that once had been Alonso's) now red with the blood of his most innocent wife, to plunge it into a father's breast. Alonso saw his madness and his purpose, and did not so much as raise a hand to ward off the blow. But the Talba (who had followed Don Pedro), with the strength and the fierceness so characteristic of his people, stepped in between, laid his powerful grasp on the upraised

hand of Don Pedro, disarmed him, and said in a voice that had in it a tone of reproach and authority, that was even appalling, "Wretched man! would you murder your father? Does this become a warrior! a prince! Leave guilt to Allah: he will fully requite it; but dip not thy steel in a father's blood. Hark! even now is God's anger known; it speaks in the terrible elements of his power. The ground trembles. Hear that awful subterranean roar! it rolls like thunder in the capacious womb of earth. It is God, the living God, who speaks, whose paths are in the deep, whose sword is the swift lightning and consuming fire; whilst darkness, that wraps the world, to him is light and day, Even such are his ways to man: forbear to scan them. Sinful in thy own nature, dare not to avenge thyself on him, who, though he has sinned heavily against thee, is still thy father, the author of thy days, thy judge, thy king."

Don Pedro heard this, and not without emotion. His hand fell by his side, his head sunk down upon his breast, as groans of agony and deep sobs spoke the unutterable anguish of his soul. At this moment a hollow noise, as that of distant thunder, seemed to roll below their feet. It was succeeded by a strange sound, like that of the rattling of chariot wheels; and the shock of an earthquake was instantaneously and sensibly felt, though the vibration was not sufficient to move from their equilibrium the strong walls of Santa Clara.

A large oriel window stood facing the appalled group of sufferers, who even in these moments of horror paused in misery, as the power of the Almighty shook at his nod the foundations of the solid earth. The window commanded a full view of the valley and mountains of Coimbra. By the lurid light, they were now distinctly seen; and the fury of the earthquake seemed principally to confine itself to the valley; for there lambent flames played like meteors, whilst columns of dense smoke arose, and the ground, from time to time, would open and shut, or vibrate as if waving in a balance. Vast fragments of rock were cast from the sides of the mountains; whilst the clouds, rolling onward, no longer intercepted their shadows, but left the trembling earth to reflect the glare of a sky red as blood.

Don Pedro raised his head as the shock was felt, gazed wildly around, and, as if in mockery of the agonies that filled his soul, smiled as he looked upon the valley agitated by the convulsion we have attempted to describe.

Some dreadful thought crossed his mind, but not a word

escaped his lips to express it. He noticed no one, he seemed conscious of nothing that was around him; but his eye was observed to rest, for an instant, on the frightful witness of his wife's death, which the Talba still held in his hand after he had disarmed the prince. Yet even the sight of this did not appear to rouse him; but suddenly turning from it, he rushed to the door, passed through every impediment that was offered to his flight, and with the swiftness of the hunted deer, was seen to pass down the mountain track that led to the valley.

Alonso, recalled to his senses by the wild and despairing rashness with which his son on such a night had rushed forth, started from his seat in the utmost agitation and alarm.

The Talba, who witnessed the misery that both father and son endured,—the one from the consciousness of his own act of cruelty which was beyond remedy, and the other from the agony of mind it had brought upon him,—could not but feel the conviction that his beloved Alcanzor was indeed avenged, by the bitter and lasting misery of his enemies. But Hamet was preserved, and would be restored in freedom to his mother: this thought rushed on his mind; and the Talba, like the lordly animal he might be said to resemble in spirit, was too generous to triumph over an enemy so self-abased, so fallen. He guessed the purpose of Don Pedro in thus frantically rushing from the convent walls to meet the fury of the earthquake where it raged in its greatest terrors. He determined to follow him, and ere he did so, thus addressed Alonso:—

"Thy son goes to bury himself in yonder valley; for there do graves open themselves to living men, and the quick become the dead. I will follow and prevent his rash design, if Allah gives me strength to save him. Alonso, a melancholy duty is thine. Look to the dead, guard the living. As I crossed yonder gallery, I heard the cry of a Moorish maiden, who called aloud to be set free, that she might seek her mistress. Let the damsel take charge of the poor infants who no longer have a mother. I may not tarry. Repent thee, king, repent thee; for though these things come not by chance, yet art thou a most guilty instrument of innocent blood. May Allah pardon thee, as thou wilt now shew mercy to those helpless beings who yet remain. They are all that remain of the once lovely, the unhappy, the murdered Ines de Castro."

Reader, our task is done; and here, perhaps, we should close this melancholy tale, as what follows is too well known in history to find a place in these pages; could we deny ourselves the satisfaction of adding, that, though late, the vengeance of heaven overtook the guilty triumvirate who had laboured to induce the king to command that Ines de Castro should die. It is also some consolation to state that, though in her lifetime the unfortunate princess did not obtain the justice she deserved, it was afterwards paid to her memory with the highest honours. We will briefly state the circumstances, since, though many of our readers are doubtless acquainted with the history of Portugal, yet possibly it may not be familiar to all, and we would leave none unsatisfied.

Don Pedro, whose passionate grief for the death of his beloved wife amounted almost to insanity, to revenge it, flew to arms, and carried fire and sword through a considerable part of the kingdom; till the Bishop of Guarda, and his noble-minded mother, Beatrice, represented to him the madness of avenging on the subjects of the king the crime which he had committed. Alonso, too, shewed many deep signs of contrition; and peace was at length restored between father and son, which continued till the death of the former.

Six years after the fatal events of Coimbra, Don Pedro ascended the throne of Portugal. His first care was to establish the validity of his secret marriage with his once adored, and still fondly remembered, Ines de Castro. He publicly attested it by oath, placing his hands on the book of the four Evangelists. The Bishop of Guarda produced also the dispensation from Rome which he had obtained to sanction that prince's union with the godmother of his son Ferdinand, and declared he had privately performed the marriage rite.

The remains of Donna Ines de Castro were then disinterred at Santa Clara; and her fond and sorrowing husband caused to be performed a ceremony till then unheard of in history or in fable. This was the solemn coronation of her corpse, as queen of Portugal, at the church of Alcobaça, with a pomp and splendour never before witnessed in the kingdom. The royal family, nobility, and courtiers, did homage to her remains, and kissed her withered hand, whilst Don Pedro stood by, directing the ceremony, as if she had been a living queen.*

* In the Exhibition at Somerset-house, 1829, there was a very masterly picture, representing this august ceremony, by the pencil of St. Evre. Soon after, the writer of these pages commenced the present work; the subject of which, as far as it relates to the unfortunate Ines de Castro, was suggested, when viewing that picture, by the effect it produced on her mind.

When this august rite of coronation was concluded, the torches that gave light to the festival, now became those of the funeral, and the body of the murdered lady, so lately crowned with this world's pomp, was once more consigned with all solemnity and honour to the darkness of the tomb. A magnificent monument of white marble was soon after erected to her memory.

These honours paid to the remains of a beloved wife were not sufficient to satisfy the feelings of a fond and sorrowing husband, who could find no peace till her death should be fully and absolutely revenged. Her murderers, most probably favoured by Alonso, who sanctioned her death, had fled with great secresy into Castile soon after that event, and there lived under the protection of Peter the Cruel, a king notorious for his own acts of horror and of murder.

Don Pedro, now himself a king, determined to get the persons of these guilty men within his own power. By a treaty set on foot between Portugal and Castile, expressly for that purpose, he secured, as his prisoners, Gonsalez and Coello. Diego had timely notice of his danger, and fled into France, where he died in poverty and disgrace: but Gonsalez and Coello suffered death by lingering torments; whilst Don Pedro, whose feelings of bitter resentment seemed to have arisen almost to madness during the execution, looked on exultingly, and reproached them to the last for their savage and guilty deed.

Gonsalez, who retorted fiercely on the prince, suffered with a firmness of spirit that, had he been a better man, or had died for a less crime, would have excited pity and admiration. As it was, execrations followed him and his guilty companion to the grave.

His vengeance in some measure satisfied, and all honour paid to the memory of his unhappy wife, Don Pedro endeavoured to turn his thoughts to the duties of his station; but, to the last, he was wont frequently, if not daily, to visit her tomb, and there to meditate upon his own approaching death. He lived, however, to prove a great and good king; and so much benefit did he confer on the country he governed, that, when he died, the whole kingdom mourned for him as for a father; and said of him, as the people of Rome did of Titus, "That either Don Pedro should never have been born, or have never died."

THE END.

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